INSPIRATION! It’s funny that I struggled a little writing this, as I have so many inspiring moments in my life, though it could purely be because I am old (young people feel more and more comfortable pointing out this fun fact to me).

My father is my greatest inspiration, and even after he went to the great beyond 12 years 11 months and six days ago, I hear him chiding (at times not gently, but quite a forceful roar depending on how silly the path I am leaning towards is), and showing me the way by his life examples.

I have been blessed with inspiring leaders; one who had the courage to walk away from the empire she built when the circumstances had changed so drastically.

And yet another, Prof Datuk Dr Khairuddin Yusof, a doctor no one can accuse of “not practising what he preaches” – climbing Acroagoga, participating in triathlons till his 60s, following which he decided to participate in competitive latin dance competitions, and always having the best attitude welcoming all us “young ones” who, at times, just needed to be heard.

During my time with an NGO for women and children who had been trafficked and abused, some said as sex workers, the depths of despair and level of trauma constantly boggled my brain. Still, there were examples of women who had come from not being able to sit across the table from a man to, after years of recovery, really taking charge of their lives and choosing to become counselors themselves to help others.

Recently, my colleagues at Leaderonomics shared an example of how three teenagers were so inspired after attending the DIODE leaders themselves to help others.

We really can choose to learn and be inspired by everyone around us, and pay it forward (unless it’s uninvited!). Have a fantastic weekend all!

KAREN NEOH
Editor
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GREAT LEADERS INSPIRE

By ZARA JAYNE
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GREAT leaders aren’t just great listeners. They also go the extra mile to inspire others and invite participation among their employees.

According to Carmine Gallo, a communications coach, “by inviting people into the process of growing or improving the company, it does more for employee engagement and employee motivation than most incentive programmes.”

So, here are some examples you can follow to encourage participation in your company:

1. MAINTAIN AN OPEN DOOR POLICY
Young people in this new era crave participation more than generations before.

Researchers at Hudson (a staffing firm) have found outstanding differences between different generations in their attitude towards their leaders.

As stated in an article by Gallo, “One quarter of employees who fell into the category of Generation X or Generation Y considered it very important to get feedback and social interaction from their supervisors at least once a week.”

“However, only 11% of older workers desired that level of communication,” he says.

2. ACTIVELY SEEK INPUT
According to Fortune magazine’s “100 Best Companies to Work” list, Griffin Hospital in Derby, Connecticut was placed in this list despite its bad reputation in the mid-1980s.

“Giffin’s transformation began when the CEO, Patrick Charmel, decided it was time to ask for help in developing a winning strategy,” Gallo writes.

Gallo adds that “Charmel not only invited current and former patients to tell him what they wanted in a hospital experience, he opened the door to staff, doctors and nurses who gave him an earful.”

Griffin has become an example for other hospitals all over the United States to invite their staff and customers into the development of improving the organisation.

3. DO UNTO OTHERS
Ask yourself, what inspires you? What are you passionate about?

The common answer for most is making a difference for a better world. “Your employees or colleagues at work are no different,” Gallo says.

They would love to participate in something purposeful.

In a nutshell, inspiring leaders actively seek feedback, listen to it and, most importantly, execute it.
WORKPLACE ITS PLACE IN THE LEADERSHIP

EMPATHY IN LEADERSHIP

By SHAHRAN MASOOD
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Modern day leaders achieve their objectives on a functional level, and with a charismatic style that engages the hearts and minds of many – if only all leaders are like Sir Richard Branson.

Unfortunately, in this day and age of best practice and social consciousness, there are still many organisations that are led with a purely autocratic style – “this is our sales target, now get it done”, for example.

Along the line, the autocratic management style leads to the same operational headaches, resulting in decreased staff morale, lower productivity and inevitable staff turnover.

The bottom-line is the correlation between productivity and people. However, the key to sustainability is getting the best out of people by aligning their aspirations with the vision of your organisation. It is easier said than done, but we must try.

The following will provide some guidance to making this happen.

WHAT IS EMPATHY?

We normally get sympathy and empathy confused with one another. A quick definition of “sympathy” is to feel the sorrow for another, whereas “empathy” is defined as the ability to identify and relate to another person’s situation, feelings or motivation.

Empathy is a form of intelligence that allows us to recognise the concerns people have. Put simply, empathy is about viewing the world through their eyes, or “putting yourself in the other person’s shoes”. I would like to think that empathy is a far more useful tool to help people – regardless of the context of leading a business or a country.

According to Daniel Goleman, the acclaimed psychologist who developed the EQ (Emotional Quotient) Emotional Intelligence framework, empathy is “perhaps the second most important element”.

Goleman regards empathy as the ability to understand the viewpoints and needs of those around you. He also observes that people with empathy are above average at recognising the feelings of others, especially when those feelings are not that obvious.

A manager or leader adept at this ability is usually excellent at seeing the intentions of others because of their heightened listening and relating skills – they are asking the right questions, and listening intently to the answer.

This usually translates to better people management.

To someone with low EQ or empathy, this might sound a little like mind-reading, but the reality is that it is an ability that anyone can develop.

EMPATHY IN THE WORKPLACE

If “the people” are a reflection of leadership, then it makes sense for managers and leaders to really get in touch with their employees.

Apart from taking the time to understand the mechanics of operations and job functions, leaders need to engage with people to appreciate the company from their perspective. Find out what they enjoy about their day in the job, and discover their recurring challenges. In this process and if you’re lucky, you might be able to identify and remove weeds before it truly grows into a problem.

As a leader with empathy, your objective is to help an employee by listening to their concerns and leading them to a solution. When you’re using empathy skills, you can better understand where they’re coming from.

You can really observe a problem objectively for what it is, and ideally without your own filter, bias or judgment. You can then prescribe a solution based on their needs, and not based on a solution conjured by how you feel.

In the bigger picture of running a company, as a leader, it’s not just about getting your staff to buy into your vision, but also for you to engage them based on their aspirations.

If you can integrate their aspirations into your vision, you will achieve collective alignment. As such, people who are more engaged produce a higher quality of work because there is a reality of sharing the same challenges and benefits.

An “us and them” attitude then changes to a more conclusive “we’re all in the same boat” mentality.

ATTRACT AND RETAIN

How many times have you heard the phrase “it’s hard to find good talent”, or “they always resign after their pay increase”? If you belong to a company that’s all too familiar with this reality and dialogue, then it might be a good time to evaluate your approach.

Apart from the promise of career progression and a salary increase, there needs to be a compelling reason to join a company, and this is usually the same reason why people stay loyal.

A work culture that embodies empathy usually has a reputation of being attractive and retaining people.

Managers in such companies habitually “put themselves in other people’s shoes” to understand the perspective of their staff, and rely on this insight to fuel their decision-making.

Ideally this philosophy proliferates through all levels of hierarchy, and influences best practice human resource management.

From the basic experience of leading by example, employees in turn behave in the same manner as their managers. Along the timeline and with consistency, an empathic organisational culture is created.

Managers who are empathetic readily show their appreciation for a good standard of work.

A study on employee recognition conducted by the American Psychological Association found 90% of employees who reported feeling valued said they were motivated to do their best at work.

On the flipside, almost all employees who were not recognised or valued were in the market for a new job within 12 months.

A CUSTOMER’S PERSPECTIVE

According to acclaimed author and leadership specialist, John C. Maxwell, “People don’t care what you know until they know that you care.”

In the context of branding and consumer behaviour, people won’t buy your product or service until they know you care. You can bang on a drum all day long to attract attention, but if you are not connecting with their real needs, your relationship will not sustain after a mere transaction.

Empathy in leadership impacts how well employees feel and perform at work, which then translates to the quality of delivery (product or service), and ultimately customer experience.

Empathy can positively affect customer service in many ways. Consider listening intently to a customer request, delivering as promised, and over-delivering by satisfying an “underlying” need.

Giving customers something they didn’t know they wanted is a step towards customer service excellence. If you can consistently deliver and communicate a level of care to customers, they should keep coming back for more.

If you look at another front end experience, can you imagine a marketing campaign for an insurance company that didn’t demonstrate empathy?

Or an airline advertisement that didn’t communicate their ability to make passengers safe and comfortable in their journey?

It’s fair to say there is a healthy dose of empathy that we weave into their message. Why? Because when people know you care, they care what you know.

Shahran Masood is a talent acceleration manager with Leaderonomics. He can be reached at shahran.masood@leaderonomics.com

BENEFITS OF EMPATHY IN ORGANISATIONS

1. Empathy helps to create a positive organisational culture based on openness and understanding.
2. Understanding the intentions, feelings, and thoughts of others help leaders become more in tune with their team’s successes and failures.
3. Creates authentic connection between people.
4. Allows for true feedback and fuels objective decision-making.
5. Without an empathic leader, employees internalise their problems and then externalise them in inappropriate ways.
6. Helps create an atmosphere of cooperation in any environment.
7. Empathic leaders are motivated to make more decisions that reflect the common good.
By PREMA JAYABALAN
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YOU are busy trying away on your laptop or in the midst of rushing from one meeting to another, when you realise that the clock has struck 1pm. It’s time for lunch. Technically, the time has come to step away from your workstation and take that much-needed one-hour break to refuel. However, how many of us actually do? Most of us are guilty of devouring our lunches with one hand while the other is typing away. Then, there is the famous term tapau (takeaway), where lunchtime consists of rushing down to the nearest food stall to pack food and gobble it up at the office within minutes. There! Lunch is done and back to work! Some take it to the next level by skipping lunch altogether because, ironically, they have “too much on their plate” and cannot afford to stop working, a notion they choose to believe. The current highly-pressurised work environment forces one to sacrifice his/her lunch to complete tasks which were delayed due to, for example, meetings which ran longer than scheduled.

Employees feel that they are procrastinating if they go for lunch prior to finishing an assignment. Similarly, some employers who need to catch up with their staff feel that lunchtime is the best hour that suits both parties. “When you demand constant effort from your brain throughout a full workday, you’ll experience diminishing productivity. What might start as an inability to come up with a workable solution to a minor problem could progress to a decreased enthusiasm for your job and even result in major burnout,” says workplace psychologist, Dr Janet Scarborough Civitelli.

In a nutshell, negligence in taking a short break in the middle of the day can bring adverse effects to one’s physical health and productivity, eventually leading to deterioration in one’s professional work. “Taking time to disconnect from your work provides renewed energy and, as a result, makes the rest of the day go more smoothly,” says Anita Attridge, a career and executive coach with the Five O’Clock Club, a career coaching organisation. Michael “Dr Woody” Woodward, organisational psychologist and author of The YOU Plan says that just like professional athletes, everyone needs energy from calories for the mind to function at its best.

“And we all need a little time to recharge, too.” A well-managed lunch break makes a significant impact to one’s productivity. Besides making you a more efficient employee, it also benefits your health and brings overall happiness to your being. Now, isn’t that what we all want, i.e. to be happy all the time? Well, in getting a step closer to that dream, here are a few things you should practise during lunchtime:

1. **ZONE OUT**
   Now this does not mean slip into a coma, but rather relax and take a deep breath. You have been on the move, thus when the precious hour arrives, just sit back and relax before jumping to the next thing on your agenda. Give yourself a good stretch and clear your mind. In a relaxed mode, you will be inspired to see things in a better perspective. Who knows, an answer or idea to a much-awaited question could spring up.

2. **STAY AWAY FROM DESK**
   When the golden hour approaches, get up and move away from your workstation. Sitting too long at your desk has proven to be hazardous to the health. Hence, get up and step out of the building to get a breath of fresh air (it can work wonders to your body and mind!). Don’t think of coming anywhere near your desk till the end of that hour.

3. **EAT**
   Spending the whole morning multitasking and jumping from one assignment to another would have sapped up all your energy. It’s time to replenish the nourishments and what you need is good, solid food. Don’t try to starve yourself because by mid-evening, you may have a headache. This throws you off-guard and damps your productivity for the day. Enjoy a healthy and delicious meal during lunch and come back to your desk re-energised.

4. **CONNECT WITH NEW PEOPLE**
   You may be working in an organisation with 500 to 1,000 employees. You may be so swamped with work that you do not know many people beyond your department, on a personal level. Guess what, your lunch break is a good time to take a stroll to other departments and invite colleagues to have lunch. This enhances relationships which will benefit your career in terms of getting additional assistance when required.

   Most importantly, make sure you don’t discuss anything pertaining to work during this time. Have casual conversations, perhaps on hobbies and travel instead.

5. **SCREEN AWAY**
   This means keeping all screens at bay, including your laptop, mobile phone and tablet. If possible, put your mobile phone on silent mode with your voicemail on for people to leave messages, if necessary. Even if you are having a sandwich at the park, your mind isn’t getting the break it deserves if you are constantly checking your emails and messages.

6. **CALL YOUR FAMILY OR FRIENDS**
   You may have family or friends who live in different cities whom you don’t get the chance to catch up with often. Well, use your lunchtime to call one or two of them just to say hi. Laughing and chatting with your loved ones helps to reduce daily stresses and puts back your smile at the end of the conversation. Sometimes, conversations like these can inspire innovative ideas and thoughts which can benefit your career.

7. **TAKE POWER NAPS**
   Sometimes, a half-an-hour shut eye is more than enough to revitalise yourself and give the additional boost to your brain. A short, power nap can result in waking up with creative and excellent ideas which the brain could not churn, prior to closing those eyes.

   So, find a quiet spot in your office, put your feet up and take a stroll down slumber land for a quick energy boost.

In conclusion, lunch break is a much-needed time for each of us to unwind, relax and re-energise ourselves. Take the hour designated for you and make full use of it to ensure a fresh comeback.

Prema is a contributing editor of Leaderonomics.com who is trying to disconnect herself from work during lunchtime. To connect with her (outside the golden hour), write to prema.jayabalan@leaderonomics.com
E are back again! The Life at Work Award 2014 recognises and celebrates women-friendly employers with leading workplace strategies that demonstrate drive, commitment and tenacity to champion the diversity and inclusion agenda.

In conjunction with the 12th Women’s Summit, the following categories of the Life at Work Award will be announced and awarded by the Deputy Prime Minister.

**AWARD CATEGORIES**

- Malaysian Organisation
- International Organisation
- Lean Organisation (less than 500 headcount)
- New Initiative/Pilot Programme
- Making a Difference
- CEO Champion

**JUDGING CRITERIA**

- Role model CEO who champions diversity and inclusion (10%)
- Implementation of work-life practices (30%)
- All entries will be judged by a panel of experienced judges in the area of diversity & inclusion (90%)
- Making a difference in diversity and inclusion at the workplace (10%)
- New diversity and inclusion initiatives which are sustainable and demonstrated outstanding achievements (10%)
- Public voting for SHORTLISTED employers (10%)

**BEST PRACTICES AMONG MALAYSIAN EMPLOYERS**

**SUNWAY GROUP**

- Implemented flex-hours and work from home to attract and retain highly-skilled and diverse workforce
- Expanding its initiatives to include women in leadership programmes

“Organisations may also adopt more flexible working hours and result-oriented performance evaluation instead of assessing employees based on hours worked.” - Tan Sri Dr Jeffrey Cheah, founder and chairman, Sunway Group

**MAYBANK**

- Introduced Flexible Work Arrangements policies which include Fixed Flexible Schedule, Flexitime, Telecommuting/Flexible Work Location, Reduced Hours/Converting to Part-time Employment

“We continuously focus on identifying issues related to women and sustaining efforts to create an inclusive and equit able work environment.” - Nora Ab Manaf, group chief human capital officer, Maybank

**SECURITIES COMMISSION**

- “TASSEK” Childcare Centre was established as part of the Securities Commission’s Organisation Transformation Programme which is committed to increasing employee productivity by allowing work-life balance

“For an organisation to stay relevant, we need to embrace change. In the SC, we are not afraid of change as we have a well-established culture of diversity, inclusiveness and taking on challenges and growing opportunities.” - Datin Teh Jia Mohd Jali, executive director, corporate resources, Securities Commission

**TELEKOM MALAYSIA**

- TM supports teleworking and flexible working hours to encourage work-life integration and improve staff retention
- TM Dynamic Kids Childcare Centre, gymnasium and clinics are among the contributors of its high employee satisfaction and improved retention rate

“Research has shown that a diverse workforce promotes both creativity and encourages critical analysis. It creates a positive vibe that will help attract the best talents and develop the company’s brand as an Employer of Choice.” - Datuk Mohd Khalis Abdul Rahim, chief human capital officer, Telekom Malaysia

For more information, please refer to:

Brought to you by TalentCorp
WHAT IS INSPIRATION?

Inspiration is a complex psychological phenomenon, for which there are various definitions. Without a doubt, inspiration is a mental process that has within it the ability to transform an individual. What is it that distinguishes someone from another in the point of origin (i.e. nature, people, personal concept) of inspiration in more “tangible” form?

Inspiration has been conceptualized in more or less similar manifestations for generations and have been used to describe the process of something sparking something within us. Inspiration is akin to oxygen that we consciously (or unconsciously) inhale, and we take in with an open or relaxed mind.

WHAT TYPE OF INSPIRATION?

Inspiration may be motivated for diverse reasons in order to generate some conceptualised inspiration in more “tangible” form. This phenomenon for generations and have been used to describe the process of something sparking something within us.

Inspiration can be divided into two broad categories: (1) Internal (within an individual) and (2) External (within a group).

Internal inspiration is when the individual is the focus of the inspiration process. Internal inspiration is often a result of personal growth, personal development, or personal realization. Internal inspiration is often a result of personal growth, personal development, or personal realization. Internal inspiration is often a result of personal growth, personal development, or personal realization. Internal inspiration is often a result of personal growth, personal development, or personal realization. Internal inspiration is often a result of personal growth, personal development, or personal realization. Internal inspiration is often a result of personal growth, personal development, or personal realization.

External inspiration is when the inspiration process is focused on an external object or person. External inspiration is often a result of the influence of an external object or person. External inspiration is often a result of the influence of an external object or person. External inspiration is often a result of the influence of an external object or person. External inspiration is often a result of the influence of an external object or person. External inspiration is often a result of the influence of an external object or person. External inspiration is often a result of the influence of an external object or person. External inspiration is often a result of the influence of an external object or person. External inspiration is often a result of the influence of an external object or person. External inspiration is often a result of the influence of an external object or person. External inspiration is often a result of the influence of an external object or person. External inspiration is often a result of the influence of an external object or person.

HOW DO WE INSPIRE?

While we cannot say that there is a single or right ratio of how we manifest and perceive inspiration, chances are we have all been inspired at one point or another. Therefore, assuming that we are all capable of being inspired, the unifying common factor of all the preceding facts that produce this phenomenon is in being sensitized to things.

The idea that inspiration can be found internally, intrinsically, or externally is a concept that has become familiar to us. For example, if you are a student, you may have been inspired by your teacher, a book, or a piece of music.

Inspiration does not only come from personal growth, personal development, or personal realization, but also from the influence of an external object or person. External inspiration is often a result of the influence of an external object or person. External inspiration is often a result of the influence of an external object or person. External inspiration is often a result of the influence of an external object or person. External inspiration is often a result of the influence of an external object or person. External inspiration is often a result of the influence of an external object or person.

In order to be inspired, we need to be open to new experiences, new ideas, and new ways of thinking. We need to be receptive to the influence of others, and to be open to the possibility of being inspired by them.

Inspiration is a mental process that has within it the ability to transform an individual. What is it that distinguishes someone from another in the point of origin (i.e. nature, people, personal concept) of inspiration in more “tangible” form?

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From designing an English-themed home, bringing greenery into an abode, creating a tranquil atmosphere through a Balinese theme to designing an ultra-modern office, she has done it all. She exudes exquisite taste and has an eye for detail, traits that epitomise a creative interior designer. She is Dhana Thiagarajah, the founder and design director of Odil Design, an interior design company established in 2004.

**EARLY DAYS**

“As a child, my favourite past-time was drawing. I was always doodling on paper with my coloured pencils. Initially, it was designs of dresses. It eventually evolved to designs and materials that would make houses look lovely,” she reminisces.

However, fate took a different turn as she pursued a degree in Information Technology (IT) after her SPM (Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia) secondary school examinations. This was due to her mother’s insistence.

“I loved IT and couldn’t wait to complete it. Once I was done, I realised that my passion was in interior design. I managed to persuade my mother to allow me to pursue my dream.”

Dhana then enrolled herself in the St. Joseph’s College in Bangalore, India and obtained her degree in interior design. She started her career as a freelance designer while studying. Some of her work is displayed in a number of places in Bangalore.

Upon completing her studies, she came back home and started working for a design company.

**THE ENTREPRENEURIAL PATH**

“I must thank my husband for Odil Design. I am from Ipoh and after marriage, moved to Nilai. I knew no one there and for the first two years, I was a stay-at-home wife and mom, doing freelance design work. My husband found my designs beautiful. He encouraged me to start my own business and helped me start it up. He passed the word around to friends and acquaintances. I got an offer to design a home and there has been no turning back since,” explains the mother of three.

Dhana now has an array of clients. She has even designed for Petronas Nasional Bhd, ArAisa Bhd and KLIA2.

With regard the mechanics of her job, she said, “Firstly, I meet with potential clients. Some know exactly what they want and have a budget for it. Some have a vague idea on the theme and engage me for professional consultation.”

“I enjoy this part of the work as I get the opportunity to propose the latest themes. After a thorough discussion, I prepare a proposal. If they are agreeable, then I go ahead and sign a contract with them.”

“Next, I proceed with the 3D design drawing that comprises insertions of materials that will be used for the space that needs designing. Once approved by my client, the groundwork kicks off.”

“I work closely with the contractor to ensure all renovation work goes according to the layout. It’s crucial to engage with the contractor to avoid mistakes in renovation which can affect the overall design. I visit sites on an agreed number of times to ensure all work is progressing according to schedule.”

When the contractor is done, Dhana comes in with her carpenter and starts work on built-in furniture, cabinets and feature walls, working closely with him/her to ensure all measurements of custom-made items are the correct fit.

**IT’S NEVER A ROUTINE**

“As a business owner, there is no fixed working time for me. My day starts with meeting clients and visiting sites. In my line, I am responsible for a project from the day I take it on until the day I hand over the keys to the client.”

“I also accompany clients to purchase furniture, lights and materials for kitchen, bathroom and bedrooms,” she explains.

According to Dhana, she has a weekly staff meeting every Monday morning where they update her on the status of projects. This is also the opportunity to address any issues that surface.

“When I visit sites, I check on the work done by the contractor and make sure that they are all according to the plan drawn. One of the challenges I face is when the construction work does not follow the plan. Usually, when this occurs, the client looks for the interior designer instead of the contractor. At times like this, the matter has to be handled delicately and I have to ensure that the client’s requirement is heeded.”

“I have had contractors and carpenters who have not complied with the measurements of materials. As a result, the cost to rectify them had to be absorbed by the contractor or me. Thus it is very important to always follow through with them on all details, even though they may seem small.”

Once she is home in the evening, Dhana looks after her children and family matters. Towards late evening, she is on the internet doing her own research.

She believes it’s very important for her to keep abreast with the latest designs, technology and materials that revolve around the “design and build” field, in order for her to provide the best consultation to clients.

**FULFILLING CAREER**

Dhana finds it unique to create something from scratch and turn it into something beautiful. She is constantly challenging herself to come up with creative designs that will impress her clients.

“Our clients pay us a lot to get their dream home or office, thus they only want the best. I am very happy to turn my passion into a career as I find immense happiness when I see the satisfied smiles on my clients’ faces when I hand over the final product.”

Dhana does not deny that it’s not a bed of roses all the time. She has encountered a number of difficult clients throughout her career. Her challenge has been to manage them effectively.

“The secret is to be patient. Patience is important in this line as you meet many different characters and some can be very demanding. Only if you are patient can you tackle these people well and secure the business.”

“Likewise, you must also be approachable to your contractors, carpenters and even the labourers to ensure communication flows smoothly. This is a guarantee the job will be completed within the time frame,” explains this cheerful lady.

To those who want to pursue a career in interior design, Dhana’s mantra is to move forward with determination and equip yourself with all the knowledge and experience to be the best in what you do.

To engage with Prema, drop her an email at prema.jayabalai@leaderonomics.com.

**PASSION TURNED PROFESSION**

**LOVE FOR THE FINER THINGS IN LIFE**

By PREMA JAYABALAN

prema.jayabalai@leaderonomics.com
LESSON FROM THE VISIONARY LEADER

By KOH EARN S0O & TEAM
editor@leaderonomic.com

A DING IN THE UNIVERSE: EVERYTHING STARTS WITH AN INSPIRING VISION

Jobs' management style broke every rule companies had adhered to since the Industrial Revolution. But it has saved Apple possibly the most successful organisation in the history of business.

From the very start, Jobs lived by true leadership, not textbook leadership. Jobs knew that creating great products that changed the world does not start with product development; it starts with a vision. His vision on how computers and people could interact, how technology could be friendly, human and appealing led to a series of great products. Offering a long-term vision gets people excited. However, it must come from true passion.

Jobs saw that his role was not clearing the way and gathering the different parts of the organisation for key projects. Instead, his job was to push and make the team better and come up with greater visions of how it could be.

In one of the many personal conversations Elliot had with Jobs, he came to the conclusion that leadership is not about pedigree but is about the individual, the person's beliefs and personal commitment. Vision and passion are more vital than credentials.

Jobs understood that every powerful business vision has to be based on customer experience and not on the lowest cost or most impressive technology. The best example is the computer mouse. He saw that with the mouse and the graphic user interface, users would have quicker and easier access for learning and usage of the computer.

The company's vision must also be embraced by your vendors and partners. Once, a potential vendor came to demonstrate a disk drive to Jobs. Their big mistake was that they set up the demo using IBM MS-DOS computers. The moment Jobs came and saw the machines, he turned and left. The silence was deafening.

One common trap for many companies is the acquisition of a new company without ensuring that the culture of the company is a good and matching fit. If you are not careful, such a move can water down your vision and culture.

People need to be reminded constantly of the company's vision. One of the ways is to give your team a special identity.

One day, Jobs came to Elliot after a dinner that he had had with Jay Chiat of Jay/Chiat Advertising. He told Elliot that they came up with a way to strengthen the culture of the Macintosh (Mac) development team. The concept is “Pirates! Not the Navy!”

The Mac team started being rebellious but was getting too big and bureaucratic, and becoming more like the “Navy” each day. So during an off-site meeting, Jobs explained that Mac was now a “Pirate” organisation and what it meant, thus setting the tone and direction of the Mac team.

No team member doubted that they were pirates and Jobs was the pirate captain. The work can be very demanding but there was a sense of being privileged to be part of a team that can never be duplicated.

As a result, people were excited and could not wait to get to work. Good managers have tried to create that kind of pirate culture where people are doing their best work.

Many have written about Jobs’ negative management styles. Elliot agrees that Jobs was often difficult and controversial but Jobs does not allow offences to get in the way because he realised the privilege of working with a visionary genius.

Jobs’ BUSINESS PHILOSOPHY AND VALUES

Jobs and Elliot spent much time discussing the core values of Apple. Jobs wanted Apple to be based on values, i.e. values that will not exchange the integrity of the product for profit.

Apple is to be the value leader and not the price leader. Goals are important but how they reach the goals are equally important.

After some long discussions, Elliot came up with a document on Apple’s business principles that included the following:

- To use the laws of human engineering to create user-friendly products that are simple and easy to use; that they become natural extensions of the users
- To create an unmatched worldwide customer service organisation to serve retailers, distributors and technical support centres.

The need for creating guidelines for Apple’s values came from a negative incident in 1983, when then CEO Mike Scotty “Scott” Scotty was unhappy seeing a group of 30 Apple employees seemingly hanging around doing nothing.

At that time, Scotty was frustrated with the failure of Apple III and he blamed management for the failure. He decided to make a point by sacking some employees even though there were no economic reasons for that.

About 30 of them were affected, including some very talented engineers. It was a bad decision and the incident was nicknamed Black Wednesday.

As a result, there was a major reshuffling of top management whereby Scotty left Apple not long after. Consequently, a task force was created to come up with a statement of Apple’s values.

It was important that Apple’s values were embraced by every Apple worker worldwide. That was achieved by inculcating these in every new employee worldwide and having new Apple managers go through a refresher in their leadership training. During their visits, key executives monitor how these values are implement ed all over the world.

After Jobs left Apple, CEO John Scully knew it was vitally important to assure the staff that Jobs’ departure would not affect the future of the company. Scully understood the power of Apple’s culture, and so, he did his best to support and reinforce that culture.

THE RETURN OF THE HEAD PIRATE

Even when Jobs was running Next, he kept in touch with what was going on at Apple. He complained to Elliot that it was a mistake for Apple to come out with products for every market segment; personal, business, education and so forth.

Later, when Jobs returned, he quickly reorganised the company to focus on products. One of the biggest advantages for Jobs after his return was that the Apple culture that was established in 1983 was still strong and alive despite top management changes.

Jobs’ early action plans were to focus on three key areas: 1. Rethink product strategy. He decided it was important to focus on products that were true to Apple’s core business and not to try to sell a multitude of products.
2. Stop inflating among executives and managers. Disagreements are inevitable when brilliant people try to solve problems together. Jobs wanted these conflicts to be handled well, and not allow them to fester and lead to destructive behaviours.
3. Create a positive environment of teamwork across the different disciplines, from product concept to sales.

People like to work in companies with strong and well-articulated values like Apple. Besides embracing those values and culture, employees also need to be a reflection of the company’s customers.

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Inspiring Jobs by Seth Godin

1. The 5 Best Practices of Great Business Leaders
2. Genius and Leadership: The Innovator’s DNA
3. Setting the table for a great business

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Apple’s set of values includes:

- Empathy for the users — interested in solving customer problems without compromising ethics in the name of profit
- Aggressiveness — set aggressive goals and push hard to build products that will change how people work and live
- Positive social contribution — be a positive social asset in communities where they operate and make the world a better place
- Innovation and vision — to develop great products that are new and needed
- Individual performance — set and expect higher personal commitment and performance than the norm
- Team spirit — each job is too big for an individual; teamwork is critical for Apple’s success
- Quality — quality that will earn the respect and loyalty of customers
- Individual reward — recognise the contribution of each individual and therefore, the employee should be rewarded accordingly. Rewards must be psychological as well as financial
- Great management — the attitudes of managers towards people are of utmost importance. Management is responsible to create an environment where Apple’s values thrive.

People need to be reminded constantly of the company’s vision. One of the ways is to give your team a special identity.
WOMEN LEADERS BLAZING A TRAIL

By RAINA RADZAIF
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THERE have been plenty of initiatives that aimed to increase the number of women working in senior roles. Many female high-achievers, from chief executive officers to editors, have valuable advice to share to women aspiring to break the glass ceiling. So what can we learn from those who had made it to the top?

Here are some lessons we should all take on board:

1. SAY YES, AND WORK OUT HOW TO DO IT LATER

As women, we’re often guilty of holding back and talking ourselves down. There’s plenty of research that show that men will apply for jobs despite only meeting some of the criteria, whilst women wait until they have it all.

Though self-doubt can be a good thing (it stops us from being arrogant) but a lack of confidence can lead to others lacking confidence in you too.

As women, we should start believing in our own abilities and start saying “I can” instead of “I can’t”. Say yes to opportunities when they arise, saying “I can” instead of “I can’t”. Say yes to opportunities when they arise, saying “I can” instead of “I can’t”.

2. BE TENACIOUS AND STEADFAST

If there’s one person who knows about tenacity, it’s Ann Summers boss, Jacqueline Gold. After joining the company at 21, she came up with the now-famous "Ann Summers party" concept. Despite having no formal training, she presented the idea to an all-male board. Although she initially got a “no”, Gold didn’t give up and eventually got to launch the concept. And, the rest is history.

Now, she is heading a company that turns over £150m with 143 stores, 7,000 party planners and a thriving online business. She believes that being tenacious and unafraid to ask for things is one of the biggest keys to networking and a successful career. If you don’t ask, you won’t get. You would be surprised how much time and support people will give you if you ask.

3. MANAGE YOUR RELATIONSHIPS

But no matter how good we are at it naturally, we still need to ensure that we manage our relationships to get the most out of them.

With a team of 27 editors and more than 8,000 bloggers under her wing, Carla Buzassi, the editor-in-chief of The Huffington Post UK, is a very busy person. In spite of that, she makes time to connect, whether it is via an email, meeting up for a cup of coffee, or through a quick phone chat. As a result, she has an impressive network.

As the old saying goes: “It’s not what you know, but who you know.” Invest as much into maintaining your relationships as you do into making sure you have the right skills for your job. There will be plenty of occasions when you come to rely on it.

4. TEAM-UP AND PAY IT FORWARD

While women are often excellent at forming relationships, on many occasions we are inclined to try to persevere alone even though we can achieve greater things together.

Vanessa Valley, a recognised expert in person-to-person connecting, has done exactly that in setting up her network, which now serves over 200,000 women a month.

Valley has plenty of experience working in male-dominated banking industries and believes in "paying it forward." She strongly believes that women must support one another. Think of it as good business karma, just like in personal relationships. Helping others means you will have plenty of grateful people to call on in the future (and it is a good feeling).

5. DON’T STOP LOOKING FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO GROW

As a leader, it is important to keep your eye on the bigger picture. Lara Morgan founded Pacific Direct at just 23, and later sold it for $20m as she knows what it takes to grow a business. She set herself personal rewards for achieving a goal. The reward can be as big or as small as you want, so long as it is something meaningful to you. It’s a good way to ensure you keep pushing yourself. Change isn’t easy, but you might be surprised with the results.

6. THE POWER IN EMOTIONAL AVAILABILITY

I was never perfect, but I am completely dedicated to the narrative emotionally. You have to be able to look at your team in the eye, and let your words speak its truth. I believe in the power of emotional availability. Let your team feel that you are there for them. No matter what impressive technology or initiatives we are planning, it has to be connected to humanity. It needs to carry truth and passion with it, as this is what will set you apart from the typical self-serving behaviours of alpha business types.

7. BREAK THE RULES AND SEE WHAT HAPPENS

Harriet Green, CEO of Thomas Cook, won the prestigious Veuve Clicquot’s businesswoman of the year award for boosting the company’s share price by 950%, and returning the business to profit after heavy losses. How did she do it? Firstly, she was unafraid to go after the job. Green famously got the Thomas Cook job by cold-calling the chairman to tell him she was the right person to bring the company out of its financial troubles, despite her lack of travel industry experience. She described the situation as, “a really good business with a terrible balance sheet.” She became the CEO in July 2012.

Green realised quite quickly that the situation at Thomas Cook was too “fragile” to benefit from an aggressive approach. Instead she took time to listen and encourage ideas and innovation, thus forging connections and engaging people with her vision. Green is also a great believer in diversity. She believes that “group-think” is the main reason to introduce more diversity. “If everyone looks and sounds the same, went to the same schools and the same universities, go to the same country clubs and play on the same golf courses, you’ll get the same behaviour.”

My advice to other women? To quote US Naval officer Grace Hopper, “It’s easier to ask for forgiveness than it is to gain permission.”

Carolyn McCall - Bloomberg

I was never perfect, but I am completely dedicated to the narrative emotionally. You have to be able to look at your team in the eye, and let your words speak its truth.
FROM INSPIRATION TO ACTION

By JASON LEE
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STEP ONE – THINK

Top Think. Recall a moment in time when you experienced something inspiring or felt really inspired to do something.

Read about Sir Richard Branson and want to start a business? Watched a travel show and you now want to pack your bags and jump on the next flight to an exotic island? Or saw the latest World Cup match and can’t wait to play some football?

We all have sudden sparks of inspiration but how often do we follow through? What makes the difference between those who are “just” inspired and those who take action and do something about it?

I have given it some thought and been inspired to share what we can do in four Ts:

1. Think
2. Talk
3. Team up
4. Take action

1 THINK – LET THE IDEA BREW

Yes, think about it. Start to process your inspiration and break it down before you take any action. You can use what is known as the “Kipling Method”, which Rudyard Kipling (author of The Jungle Book) mentioned in one of his poems:

“I keep six honest serving-men/Their names are What and Why and When/And How and Where and Who.”

You can apply it using this process of thinking it through, in no particular order:

• When were you inspired?
• Who inspired you?
• Where did the inspiration come from?
• What inspired you to take action?

2 TALK – STIR IT UP

Talk to someone about your inspired moment. If you don’t share it, it will be bottled up in your mind like the world’s oldest, 1,650-year-old bottle of wine which is still on display at the Pflaz Historical Museum in Germany.

One may think that the wine may go down better with age but wine “professor” Monika Christmann was quoted saying, “micro-biologically (of the wine), it is probably not spoiled, but it would not bring joy to the palate.”

So, don’t let your inspiration swim too long in your mind, lest it becomes of no joy to you!

In Keith Ferrazzi’s book Never Eat Alone, he shared in one of his chapters about “sharing your passion” with the book’s premise that real networking is about finding ways to make other people more successful.

When we talk about our inspired moments, find ways to share yours without the main intention of seeking help, but to help others find success as well. If you’re inspired to travel the world, don’t only share it with your friends, but also ask about what inspires them.

Real life example: The idea to start a school became a talking point when friends around me started talking on roles as educators. I have many friends who joined the “fellowship” with Teach For Malaysia, an independent, not-for-profit organisation with a mission to end education inequity in Malaysia.

The Teach For Malaysia Fellowship is a two-year, full-time and fully paid leadership development programme modelled after the extremely successful Teach For America initiative.

One of those friends is Abel Cheah, my secondary school friend. We grew up together and recently started talking about our inspired moments in education.

3 TEAM UP – ADD MORE INGREDIENTS

Team up may be optional depending on what you are inspired to do. If it is a simple idea, go ahead and take action!

But if you want your idea to be sustainable, look for like-minded people to help be the legs to your inspiration. As the African proverb goes, “if you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”

Real life example: Cheah knew I was involved in education via a few initiatives I had been working on. As a banker, part of my employee volunteering initiative is to provide financial education programmes to schools across Malaysia.

I took the opportunity to volunteer and have since spoken to at least 1,000 children. I also conducted a study seminar and took up a part-time job as a law lecturer some time back.

4 TAKE ACTION – MAKE IT WORK AND GIVE IT A SHOT!

Make use of the opportunities in front of you, one step at a time. Start with small steps. Most of the time, this is when we fail to follow through. Why? The fear of failure rears its ugly head, whereas it feels safer to think and develop your idea instead.

I wanted to share a statistic on inspired ideas that never happened, until I realised that you can’t come up with statistics if an idea never did happen! Wayne Gretzky, a Hockey Hall of Fame, summed it up with, “You miss 100% of the shots you don’t take.”

Real life example: Back to Cheah. He also had a dream to start a school one day, and he proposed the idea to start LifeSchool. Together with Jacintha Tagal, Liew Sue Li and Karthik Karunanithi, we formed LifeSchool, a modest enterprise that provides secondary students life skills to prepare them for the real world.

LifeSchool exists to sustain a not-for-profit enrichment programme, Afterschool. Afterschool provides high quality additional lessons to students from low-income families in Segambut.

THE STORY GOES ON...

We started through a partnership with Sunway University College to host a workshop, and recently secured corporate sponsorship to provide life skills to students of a secondary school in East Malaysia.

We are not a school per se but all this is part of the journey to start a proper school one day. This all took place in less than a year, and we are now definitely closer to our inspired dream.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

I will end with a proverb by Chinese philosopher Lao Zhu: “A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.” It starts with thinking, talking, teaming up, and then taking action on your inspiration.

As a final thought, don’t stop improving your inspired moments, and practise what Anthony Robbins calls the principle of CAN! – Constant And Never-ending Improvement.

DON’T LET YOUR INSPIRATION SWIM TOO LONG IN YOUR MIND, LEST IT BECOMES OF NO JOY TO YOU!
1. “If we call ourselves a family, then we must acknowledge that families have conflict. Fight, have conflicts, but work out your differences and reconcile.” – Roshan Thiran

2. “In dealing with life and its complexities; make sense of different choices, make your choice, make peace with your choice. Some may disagree with the order.” – Evelyn Teh

3. “You don’t find the solution to life. It’s not meant to be solved. It will be like this till the end. And that’s the beauty of it all.” – Sabrina Kamaruddin

4. “Our young people are growing up basing their value on material things and performance, performance, performance. We must fight to reclaim our nation’s youth, teaching them that their self-worth can only be based on their intrinsic personhood.” – Hui Yi Wen

5. “Sometimes, in darkness you find clarity.” – Hyma Pillay

6. “Sometimes, all you have to do is change yourself and everything will fall into place.” – Prema Jayabal

7. “If you lack talent, sheer determination and hard work will get you there.” – Andrew Lau

8. “You don’t always have to make it right, just make it worth it.” – Millie Ong

9. “To make others happy, you yourself have to be happy first.” – Nadia Radhuan

10. “Nobody actually grows up, we all just learn how to act in public.” – Divya Chandy

11. “Sometimes you have to be selfish to be kind to yourself.” – Ameera Hussain

12. “And sometimes, kindness finds its way back to you.” – Alvin Dan

13. “The person who has been forgiven much, loves much.” – Majura Perashot

14. “Protégé makes good leaders, but great leaders… that’s something else.” – Marcus Lim

15. “Chivalry is the new black.” – Shahran Masood

16. “Leaders get things done at all cost without compromising values.” – Eric Lau

17. “From trials to testimony.” – Jeremy Tan

18. “No one is too skilled to pick up litter.” – Lily Cheah

19. “Being number one doesn’t need to be a lonely experience; share it with someone and we become exponential!” – Lim Lay Hsuan

20. “Sometimes I wonder if the fear of something is what sets us apart from it that we fear.” – Sarah Tan

21. “Breakthroughs are often just around the corner. All you got to do is make that turn.” – Ian Lee

22. “When given a choice, figure out how to take both. The world doesn’t have to be an either/or.” – Vinesh Naidu

23. “We all change. When you think about it, we are all different people, all through our lives and that’s okay, that’s good! You’ve got to keep moving, so long as you remember all the people that you used to be.” – Imran Hashim

24. “My greatest inspiration is my Pa. There isn’t a quote per se, because he was busy just getting it done! Here’s one of many reasons. Upon retirement, Pa decided he would conquer the world of computers. Within a few short months, he went from close to no knowledge, to understanding hardware and software, essentially becoming the repair guy for many friends and family. Humility and childlike inquisitiveness. My Pa.” – the anonymous editor

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