KAREN NEOH
Editor
leaderonomics.com

TRY THIS!

United We Stand, Divided We Fall

BY LIM LAY HSUAN
layhsuan.lim@leaderonomics.com

Malaysia Day, observed every Sept 16, is a day to commemorate the "marriage" between the east (Sabah and Sarawak) and the west (Malaya and Singapore) then 51 years ago. As with any marriage, it takes effort from all Malaysians to nurture and grow this unique relationship.

Like a garden, it needs constant care so that future generations of this country can continue to see the nation bloom and bear good fruits to be enjoyed by all.

Here are three keys to help preserve unity in Malaysia:

CELEBRATE DIVERSITY

Malaysia is extremely rich in diverse ethnic groups, cultures and religions, but these differences should not hinder us from getting together as one people.

On the contrary, this should be all the more reason why we celebrate our uniqueness as we stand out as an exemplary nation to the world on how we can live harmoniously and work together for the common good.

Despite our cultural differences, we Malaysians also know deep in our hearts that we are very similar because we Malaysians also know deep in our hearts that we are very similar because we are all under the same sun and walk under the same moon?

UPHOLD OUR RUKUNEGARA

Rukunegara (National Principles) is a shared vision of our forefathers for national unity and remains a cornerstone for nation-building.

As sons and daughters of this land, we ought to ensure that the five tenets are deeply rooted in us, and always observed and respected.

The five tenets are: Belief in God; Loyalty to King and Country; Supremacy of the Constitution; Rule of Law; and Good Behaviour and Morality.

EMBRACE MODERATION

Global Movement of Moderates CEO Datuk Safuddin Abdullah once said that while the voices of extremism are often heard, it does not in any way reflect the sentiment of the majority of Malaysians.

Therefore, if we are the majority, we ought to work together in making Malaysia better.

For example, our unique “open house” gatherings during festivities is a great “excuse” to invite friends and neighbours of different cultural backgrounds to bond and strengthen relationships.

The Voice of the Moderates initiative by The Star is another commendable effort to encourage sensible Malaysians to speak up more, because moderates are the ones who will pave the way forward for our nation.

Taking the Cue from Scorpion’s "Under the Same Sun, shouldn’t we be living as one since we live under the same sun and walk under the same moon?"

Blessed 51st Birthday, Malaysia!

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

Did you know?

"Where there is unity there is always victory."

- Publius Syrus

"Even if a unity of faith is not possible, a unity of love is." – Hans Urs von Balthasar

"Society is unity in diversity."

- George Herbert Mead

"The essence of the beautiful is unity in variety."

- W. Somerset Maugham and Felix Mendelssohn

"Individuality or unity? I say there’s room for both."

- Brian Cello

"When there is no enemy within, the enemies outside cannot hurt you."

- African proverb

TUNE IN

Capital FM 88.9FM

in the Klang Valley

107.6FM

in Penang

Want practical tips for success on your way home from work? We’re on every Friday from 6pm to 7pm.

JOIN US!

This Career Guide is Powered By Leaderonomics

If you have any suggestions or feedback on our content, get in touch with the Leaderonomics team at editor@leaderonomics.com

For advertising and editorial, please contact Pravin Kumar at pravin.kumar@leaderonomics.com or +603 2377 7800

GOD BLESS MALAYSIA!

YEARS ago, I left Malaysia and was immersed in a culture that seemingly celebrated individualism. I became enamoured with the desire to be different, and to break away from the constant need to conform. Even then, I firmly believed that being different should not preclude someone from being part of something bigger.

But what does it mean to be unique? People dress differently to identify themselves with a chosen subculture, speak differently to be part of a group they aspire to. These outward differences, while very visible, are less important than what drives people and what life purpose they have chosen for themselves.

I am not alone in thinking that any diverse group can be, and are united around a clear purpose. I believe that this is why the entire workforce at the SPCA animal hospital I used to work for, and the team at Leaderonomics work well. The social objectives of both organisations are so entrenched that it overrides any bickering or disputes people may have.

And so it is with our Malaysia.

After a tumultuous start to the year, I am reassured that Malaysia and her people stand united. We all want to see our country excel, and work together bidinggah to build better spaces to live in and to raise our families.

On point, David Wei addresses collaboration – what it is, and what it is not – and how to drive collaboration in a company. In a similar vein, but with quite an unexpected approach, Vinesh Naidu talks about how leaders can unite their teams.

In an interview with Datuk Seri Idris Jala, our roving contributing editor Lim Lay Hsuan learns more of his humble beginnings and his journey to where he is today.

To celebrate Malaysian movies, Yasir Osman writes about "Marriage" between the east (Sabah and Sarawak) and the west (Malaya and Singapore) then 51 years ago. As with any marriage, it takes effort from all Malaysians to nurture and grow this unique relationship.

Like a garden, it needs constant care so that future generations of this country can continue to see the nation bloom and bear good fruits to be enjoyed by all.

Here are three keys to help preserve unity in Malaysia:

CELEBRATE DIVERSITY

Malaysia is extremely rich in diverse ethnic groups, cultures and religions, but these differences should not hinder us from getting together as one people.

On the contrary, this should be all the more reason why we celebrate our uniqueness as we stand out as an exemplary nation to the world on how we can live harmoniously and work together for the common good.

Despite our cultural differences, we Malaysians also know deep in our hearts that we are very similar because we are all under the same sun and walk under the same moon?

UPHOLD OUR RUKUNEGARA

Rukunegara (National Principles) is a shared vision of our forefathers for national unity and remains a cornerstone for nation-building. As sons and daughters of this land, we ought to ensure that the five tenets are deeply rooted in us, and always observed and respected.

The five tenets are: Belief in God; Loyalty to King and Country; Supremacy of the Constitution; Rule of Law; and Good Behaviour and Morality.

EMBRACE MODERATION

Global Movement of Moderates CEO Datuk Safuddin Abdullah once said that while the voices of extremism are often heard, it does not in any way reflect the sentiment of the majority of Malaysians.

Therefore, if we are the majority, we ought to work together in making Malaysia better.

For example, our unique “open house” gatherings during festivities is a great “excuse” to invite friends and neighbours of different cultural backgrounds to bond and strengthen relationships.

The Voice of the Moderates initiative by The Star is another commendable effort to encourage sensible Malaysians to speak up more, because moderates are the ones who will pave the way forward for our nation.

Taking the Cue from Scorpion’s "Under the Same Sun, shouldn’t we be living as one since we live under the same sun and walk under the same moon?"

Blessed 51st Birthday, Malaysia!
A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT

ENSURING EVERYONE WINS

By DAVID WEE
editor@leaderonomics.com

A collaborative effort involves a more diverse cast they come together because of a belief that the best way of achieving their goals is to collaborate with others.

An example is given below.

Johnny is head of sales of a heavy transport equipment company. The more he sells, the bigger his commission. Jenny is the plant manager. The more she produces, the higher her bonus. Henry is the CFO (chief financial officer). The more profits the company makes, the greater the value of his stock options.

Johnny wants to agree to the deal because this is good business and increasing his market share is part of the company’s overall goal.

Henry’s challenge is convincing Jenny that she needs to re-tool and change the layout of the plant to accommodate the modification. But that could mean a dip in productivity and increase in cost, and hence would impact Jenny’s assessment and reward.

However, they can get to the top if they band and fight together. So when in danger, individuals quickly act as a tribe to fend off predators. They discover “mutual interest” – they will always be prey so long as they act individually.

There are some lessons here:

- The discovery of mutual interest is most often stimulated by a crisis (being prey) and/or huge opportunity (king of the food chain).
- The benefits of mutual interest trump self-interest because collectively we can do more and better.

**COLLABORATIVE DRIVERS**

- Focus on mutual interest
- Stop harping about “common good.” It’s naive to expect that people will subjugate their self-interest for the benefit of others.

Instead, rally people around mutual interests by showing how collaboration can bring a bigger win for everyone.

- Grow collaborative leaders

Collaboration requires leaders who can subordinate their agenda and give up resources for the greater good.

These concepts are foreign to many leaders. So help them acquire relevant skills including a win-win orientation and the ability to discover and articulate “mutual interest.”

- Make collaborating easy

Cisco Systems drove down the direct costs of collaboration by leveraging wikis (websites built and edited by communities of users) and pioneering telepresence technologies (enhanced videoconferencing) that enabled affordable long-distance collaboration among employees globally.

By innovating on collaboration technologies, the outcomes of collaborative projects resulted in savings of US$691m and increased productivity by almost 5%.

- Reward collaborators

Companies have historically rewarded achievement-oriented leaders who drive short-term results but collaboration requires an enterprise and longer term perspective.

In addition, collaborative projects have a gestation period that is longer than the annual performance appraisal system.

So encourage your reward system is calibrated and your collaborators get due recognition.

- To COLLABORATE or NOT to COLLABORATE

- The time the iPod was introduced, there were already some 50 MP3 players in the market. In fact, Saehan Information System created the first digital audio player in 1998, a full three years before the iPod launch.

So how could Apple’s iconic product go on to become the “walkman of the 21st century”?

Success came from its ability to manage rapid innovation through excellent internal and external collaborative networks.

Steve Jobs knew that the MP3 player on its own had little value. The product needed music management software (iTunes).

It needed a retail hub where users can purchase music online (iTunes Music Store) and it needed the introduction of broadband so songs could be speedily downloaded online.

In short, Apple was not selling a digital device. It was selling a brand new way of selecting, buying and listening to music that consumers would find delightful.

Bringing this together required both internal and external collaboration with Toshiba, PortalPlayer, Pixo, Wolfson Microelectronics, and Sony.

For four hours a day, on the first day of each week for 40 weeks a year and for the next decade and more, Jobs got groups of designers, engineers, marketers, and metalurgists together in one room to leverage their collective wisdom and come up with products that delighted the world.

Three years after the iPod was introduced, Sony launched a competing MP3 player. Sony was a formidable opponent. Back then, its revenue was 10 times larger than Apple’s and it owned Sony Music. The product failed miserably.

At Sony, where the culture encouraged internal competition over collaboration, a digital music player did not make as much sense from a P&L (profit and loss) standpoint for any individual business unit.

Sony Music did not want to abandon its traditional business model and had concerns about protecting its copyrights electronically.

So the question is whether companies should collaborate or not. The correct question you should be asking is what kind of company do you want to lead? A world beater or a “wannabe”?

David Wee is a HR director currently based in Indonesia who has lived, worked and travelled all over the world. For more leadership articles, visit www.leaderonomics.com. To send your feedback, email editor@leaderonomics.com
WHAT defines a true leader? This answer usually changes depending on the person. Some say that true leaders inspire, some say that leadership is influence, and others say that leaders should be humble.

In short, there are many things that define a great leader, and although there are a few important qualities to have, there is no specific mould to fill. They come in many shapes and sizes with different strong points – some are especially inspiring, some are especially influential, and some are especially humble. As it has been said many times before, everyone is unique. In this article, I’m going to focus on personalities in Malaysia who lead through influence and by their own example.

Here are a few of them.

**DATUK DR KIM TAN**

Tan is the founder chairman of SpringHill Management Ltd (UK), as well as an adviser to many government agencies in Asia on biotechnology. Apart from that, Tan is also a trustee of Transformational Business Network, a network which includes entrepreneurs, business and financial professionals, technical specialists and social investors who aim to transform their communities through sustainable business solutions to poverty. They use their skills and resources to support projects and SMEs (small and medium enterprises) that create jobs and empower the poor.

Tan also supported the Kuzuko Game Reserve, a conservation and social transformation project in an area of high unemployment in South Africa. Having co-authored the book, Fighting Poverty Through Enterprise: The Case for Social Venture Capital, Tan believes that economies are transformed through enterprises to not only better the communities of the lesser privileged, but to also give them a sense of dignity and independence.

**ANANDA KRISHNAN**

An inspiring woman, Khong manages to juggle being the director of an international petroleum company, an active philanthropist, as well as a mother of three children. Currently the president of Kechara Soup Kitchen Community, Khong heads a community action group that distributes food, basic medical aid, and counseling to the homeless and urban poor in Malaysia.

Apart from that, she has also been invited to give speeches on social work and humanity, and has spoken as a panelist at the Philanthropy in Asia Summit in 2012. As a loving mother, Khong is an example of one of the most commonly said phrases, “charity starts from home” – which means that someone who displays a charitable attitude at home will display the same outside of it.

This kindness is evident in her three children who have joined her in community work after their graduation, with two of them set up for underprivileged children, they provide these facilities to children in poor Asian countries to help them develop skills that will be useful for them in their future careers, and also further enabling these children to build up their communities in the future.

**MOHD KASSIM SULONG AND MILIZEE KASSIM**

With Mohd Kassim as the co-founder of Deloitte KassimChan, an accounting firm, and Milizee Kassim as the director of Harta Setia, these corporate leaders are your local exemplary power couple.

The couple started the Kassim Chin Humanity Foundation together, which was set up with the objective of providing facilities to the poor and needy, regardless of their nationality, race, sex, age, or religion. One of their current biggest projects in their foundation is their Asia International Vocational Centre.

**DATUK RUBY KHONG**

An inspiring woman, Khong manages to juggle being the director of an international petroleum company, an active philanthropist, as well as a mother of three children. Currently the president of Kechara Soup Kitchen Community, Khong heads a community action group that distributes food, basic medical aid, and counseling to the homeless and urban poor of Malaysia.

Apart from that, she has also been invited to give speeches on social work and humanity, and has spoken as a panelist at the Philanthropy in Asia Summit in 2012. As a loving mother, Khong is an example of one of the most commonly said phrases, “charity starts from home” – which means that someone who displays a charitable attitude at home will display the same outside of it.

This kindness is evident in her three children who have joined her in community work after their graduation, with two of them eventually joining her full-time, proving that Khong is a true leader by example.

**MOHSEN ANANDA**

Anandh Anandan is a successful businessman and philanthropist. He is known for his contributions to various social causes and for setting up his own company, Exoil Trading. He has also contributed much to education in Malaysia.

Apart from the many lessons we can learn from him, Krishnan’s lifestyle teaches us an important value: always give back to your society.

**MOHENDRAN ANN OSMAN**


**TAN SRI MICHELLE YEOH**

Michelle Yeoh – Acclaimed Hollywood actress.
FAMOUS WORLDWIDE

APART from being given the opportunity to research and write on great corporate leaders in Malaysia, I was also given the privilege to interview Amber Chia and Datuk Dr Sheikh Muszaphar Shukor. I asked them about their thoughts on unity for the upcoming Malaysia Day.

DATUK DR SHEIKH MUSZAPHAR SHUKOR
ORTHOPAEDIC SURGEON AND ASTRONAUT

Sheikh Muszaphar is an astronaut, orthopaedic surgeon, motivational speaker, as well as a fellow researcher at the Institute of Space Science, National University of Malaysia (UKM).

Not only was he the first Malaysian to go into outer space, he was also the first Muslim to observe Ramadan in space. Additionally, he performed experiments on board the International Space Station.

There are many valuable lessons that we can learn from him, with the most important being the necessity to nurture our abilities to spot and seize opportunities that come our way, which has been proven by his achievements throughout his career.

How do you think we can continue to develop harmony and unity in our country, as Malaysians?

As Malaysians, it is important to have an open mind and tolerance. For respect for other religions and cultures is vital to maintain harmony and unity. Being patriotic should not just be on Merdeka Day but throughout. Instilling love for the country should begin to be cultivated and nurtured from young. A knowledgeable nation is what we should aim for, as being educated, open-minded, having an understanding of others, and holding them in high regards are key elements to sustaining harmony and unity in a multiracial country like Malaysia – and we have certainly proven that with time.

I hope that Malaysians do not take these values for granted. They are what make us unique as Malaysians!

In your opinion, why do you think it is important to lead by influence?

You need to have substance in order to lead. You need to have the right qualities and be an example before leading others. Each of us should focus on strengthening his values and being the best person in whatever he does in life. Only then will people listen and look to you for guidance.

What is your recipe for success?

Having a big dream, passion, belief in yourself. Strive hard to achieve your dream. Failure is good as you learn from it and become a better person. Do not forget to grab every opportunity and do not be afraid to take risks in life. In other words, you need to have the right ingredients to succeed. Anyone can do it with the right mental attitude.

What is your advice for the Gen-Ys?

The voice of Gen-Y is very important to the nation. Be fresh, dynamic, competent and aggressive with ideas in order to make a change. Competence and innovation is important, so start preparing yourselves with these qualities. The country should certainly give the youth a voice to be heard as they play a big role in shaping the direction of this nation.

AMBER CHIA
INTERNATIONAL MODEL AND PRINCIPAL OF AMBER CHIA ACADEMY

Born in Ipoh but raised in Sabah, Chia is an established international model and actress. Chia has an impressive history as a model. She has done fashion shows and photo shoots for many prominent brands, such as Chanel, Victoria Beckham, and Jimmy Choo – another famous Malaysian!

Not only that, she has also been awarded with various titles, one of them being “Most Popular Celebrity Model of the Year” in the Malaysia Model Festival Awards. Chia is currently the founder and principal of her own modeling school, called Amber Chia Academy. Coming from a small town, her career proves to us that success is not impossible for anyone, provided that we put in hard work to develop our passion.

How do you think we can continue to develop harmony and unity in our country, as Malaysians?

As Malaysians, and human beings in general, I believe that we should all be treated as equals – regardless of gender, race, religion, occupation or background – and be given equal opportunities. By giving the same respect to everyone, it can be a big step towards developing harmony and unity in our country.

In your opinion, why do you think it is important to lead by influence?

Similar to what I have mentioned before, equality is very important in many aspects, including leadership. As such, leaders should lead by influence and example because if they want others to do something, they must be able to show that they are willing to do it first, and do it well.

What is your recipe for success?

It will be difficult to succeed in what you do because you don’t enjoy what you’re doing. And, of course, hard work goes without saying because nothing comes free in life.

What is your advice for the Gen-Ys?

One of my favourite advice, and one that I strongly live by, is “never try, never know”. If you don’t go for it and try, you will never know whether it will work out. You will only be filled with questions and regrets. But, if you try and it doesn’t work out the way you want it to, then at least you won’t be regretful.

Some parting words: To everyone reading this, Happy Malaysia Day and let’s celebrate being Malaysians with pride!

JAMES WAN – Writer and director. Famously known for the movies Saw, Insidious, and The Conjuring.

HONG YI – Artist-architect. Known for her portrait of Yao Ming which she painted using a basketball and red paint.

BERNARD CHANDRAN – Fashion designer. Apart from the royal family in Malaysia, he has designed for Tori Amos, Estelle, and Lady Gaga.

TASH AW – Author of critically acclaimed novels, with The Harmony Silk Factory being his first.

PROF DR HALIMATON HAMDAN – Recipient of the 2009 Merdeka Award for health, science, and technology, for outstanding contribution in the development and application of maerogel as a commercially viable multi-purpose material.

MOHD NASARUDIN MOHD YUSOF – Winner of Malaysia’s First Nobel Peace Prize in 2013. He was awarded for his collaborative work with the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons or OPCW.

There are countless other Malaysians who carry precious lessons for us to take away. They come in different shapes and sizes, and are not necessarily leaders on the frontline. These people are there for us to meet and discover – all we have to do is go forth and build those relationships. This Malaysia Day, I hope we don’t forget the importance of unification through relationships, as well as the significance of leading through influence and building communities of love.
UNITY AND LEADERSHIP

GOING AGAINST THE GRAIN

By VINESH NAIDU
vinesh.naidu@leaderonomics.com

1 CLARITY IS OVERATED

The fastest way to ensure you disrupt unity is by not providing enough clarity. Why? Because when there is a lack of clarity, it creates space for people to interpret what is to be the best way forward. This in turn enables multiple assumptions to be made. The recipe becomes that much more potent when you ensure that you do not provide space for people to ask questions and clarify your intentions.

Be strong. Do not give in to those pesky questions that the minions come up with. They are supposed to just DO. NOT ASK.

Say different things to different people at different times. It is their job to figure things out. That’s what they are being paid for, aren’t they?

You are the genius with the wonderful mind brimming with wonderful ideas. How can you be expected to be clear on just ONE thing?

“I think, therefore I am... confused.”

— Benjamin Hoff, The Tao of Pooh

2 GOSSIP

This is the best way to ensure there is turmoil in the workplace. Ensure you spend enough time talking about other people and their perceived shortcomings to as many others as you possibly can.

You don’t have to have seen or heard anything in person. It is enough that you might have overheard just a part of an ongoing conversation to pass it on.

And you know what the best part is? You don’t need face-to-face meetings to gossip. The eternal space that is social media is a wonderful place to get people to gossip to ensure the organisation is permeated by gossip to ensure the organisation is permeated by gossip to ensure the organisation is permeated by gossip to ensure the organisation is permeated by gossip to ensure the organisation is permeated by gossip to ensure the organisation is permeated by gossip to ensure the organisation is permeated by gossip to ensure the organisation is permeated by gossip.

“Strong minds discuss ideas, average minds discuss events, weak minds discuss people.”

— Socrates

3 CRITICISM AS THE NEW INSPIRATION

Dealing with difficult people, a.k.a. people other than yourself, is a tough job. As a result, you have no choice but to be tough about it.

And it most definitely requires that people are treated fairly. Because when there is a lack of clarity, it creates space for people to interpret what is to be the best way forward.

This in turn enables multiple assumptions to be made. The recipe becomes that much more potent when you ensure that you do not provide space for people to ask questions and clarify your intentions.

Be strong. Do not give in to those pesky questions that the minions come up with. They are supposed to just DO. NOT ASK.

Say different things to different people at different times. It is their job to figure things out. That’s what they are being paid for, aren’t they?

You are the genius with the wonderful mind brimming with wonderful ideas. How can you be expected to be clear on just ONE thing?

“I think, therefore I am... confused.”

— Benjamin Hoff, The Tao of Pooh

4 ENSURE YOU HAVE A FAVOURITE

Nothing promotes disunity like segregating the subjects that you rule. And once you have segregated them, make sure the next step of choosing and then favouring the chosen few is highlighted to the rest of your subjects.

Use all the tools and power at your disposal. Promote them without reason. Pay them more than anyone else.

 Ensure they are the only ones that get special privileges like having flexible hours at work. And don’t forget to ask if they would like fries with that.

The recipe becomes that much more potent when you ensure that you do not provide space for people to ask questions and clarify your intentions.

Be strong. Do not give in to those pesky questions that the minions come up with. They are supposed to just DO. NOT ASK.

Say different things to different people at different times. It is their job to figure things out. That’s what they are being paid for, aren’t they?

You are the genius with the wonderful mind brimming with wonderful ideas. How can you be expected to be clear on just ONE thing?

“I think, therefore I am... confused.”

— Benjamin Hoff, The Tao of Pooh

5 AVOID DUN

Last, but not the least, avoid allowing any opportunities for fun within the team.

This is a sure fire way to create unity. If people have fun, they form camaraderie, and when people enjoy camaraderie, they tend to want to look out for each other. And when people start looking out for each other, they start forming bonds. This allows unity to become a building block of growth for the organisation!

“No, no, no!”

“That’s the thing about depression: a human being can survive almost anything, as long as she sees the end in sight. But depression is so insidious, and it compounds daily, that it’s impossible to ever see the end.” — Elizabeth Wurtzel, Prozac Nation

Now take all of these sage words of advice and ensure you stay strong in the face of resistance and demonstrations of employee pushback.

The end objective is to create as much diversity as possible and there is no better mix other than to bulldoze your way through using just some of the aforementioned tools.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

So this Malaysia Day let’s reflect on what truly bonds us as Malaysians.

What are the building blocks of unity that has brought us this far in our journey, and what is going to allow us to continue to go forth and leave an impact on this earth?

We might not be able to push unity through at the national level but we can definitely create personal spheres of unity within our organisational spheres.

Therefore you do have a circle of influence.

Vinesh Naidu has found yet another way to join us to attention by turning conventional wisdom on its head. Do read on!

EDITOR’S NOTE:

For the uninitiated, our loyal contributor Vinesh Naidu has found yet another way to join us to attention by turning conventional wisdom on its head. Do read on!

UNSTICKING THE TONGUE FROM THE CHEEK

If, on the other hand, you actually want to be a purveyor of unity in the organisation, than please ensure you do the EXACT opposite of the advice so clearly articulated above.

Without unity, everything crumbles. Humans are social beings and therefore unity is a default mechanism of existence. But why then is unity so elusive?

Simple. It’s not easy to bring people together. Everyone comes to adult-
nation is after all the collective people and their socio-economic needs. Do have a circle of influencers to work on to ensure unity of your national identity. As Day, my fellow

By Vinesh Naidu is talent programmer at Leaderonomics, helping to identify, develop and accelerate talent in critical organisations. For more writings by Vinesh, visit leaderonomics.com

MOVIE WISDOM

MOVIE LESSONS FROM COOL RUNNINGS

By SARAH TAN
sarah.tan@leaderonomics.com

“FEEL the rhythm! Feel the rhyme! Get on up, it’s bobsled time! Cool Runnings”!

Cool Runnings, a Disney movie released in 1993, is based on a true story about the first Jamaican bobsled team that made it to the winter Olympics.

At this point, you may be wondering if there was a misprint.

A bobsled team? Formed in a country with a tropical climate?

To answer your question — yes, it really did happen! Before reading on, this is a warning: there are spoilers ahead.

Cool Runnings focuses on Derice Bannock, a runner who aspires to make it to the Olympics. However, during the trials, a competing runner unfortunately stumbles, causing Bannock and a few other runners to trip and lose the race.

Desperate to get into the Olympics anyway, he eventually finds out about bobsledding as a sport in the winter Olympics.

After convincing a retired Olympics bobsledder, Irving, to train him, Bannock manages to form a team from the unlikelyest of people — Sanka, his humorous friend, as well as Junior and Yul Brenner, two other runners who didn’t make it through the trials.

Cool Runnings contains many valuable lessons, paired alongside cheesy jokes, funny characters, and touching scenes. Here are the two top lessons that I took from it:

1. EVERY TEAM IS UNIQUE

In the movie, the Jamaican bobsled team is contrasted against the Swiss team during the Olympics. With the Swiss portrayed as professional and exact, the Jamaicans were shown to be more easygoing and fun-loving.

At the same time, both teams had basic principles of hard work and good team chemistry.

There are dozens of certified methods out in the world that can teach us how to develop a team with cohesive teamwork.

While most of the methods are relevant and applicable, we must also understand that past the basic principles, no two teams operate the same way.

Instead of merely following basic principles in generating good teamwork, we should also have an understanding of our team and how it works, to help us work together better.

Similarly, Bannock who tries to follow the methods of the Swiss bobsled team in order to achieve the same success, is corrected by Sanka, “We can’t apply the same ‘eins, zwei, drei’ method to every group project!”

2. FINISH THE RACE WELL

At the end of the movie, the team manages to hold its own and make it to the last round of the competition. Near the finish line, it encounters a bad bounce, causing its old bobsled to go out of control and topple over.

Even though it is obviously unable to win, the team continues and finishes the race.

With Bannock leading them, the four boys hoisted the sled over their shoulders, walked together to the finish line, and were met with applause and admiration from the audience as well as their competitors.

We can surely learn from their spirit of excellence. If a team is led by someone who desires to accomplish all tasks with a sense of excellence, this vision can be shared with others to produce well executed work.

“Shut up, Now do I, Sanka. So do I.

For more articles by Sarah Tan, go to www.leaderonomics.com
THE HE(ART) OF MALAYSIAN MOVIES

By YASIR OSMAN
yasir.osman@leaderonomics.com

T HE year Malaysia gained its independence, was the same year iconic P. Ramlee released his first comedy called Bujang Lapok. Fifty-seven years on, the highest grossing Malaysian movie is The Journey, directed by Chui Keng Guan.

Both films are landmarks in the Malaysian movie industry as it has evolved over time. To commemorate Malaysia Day, “I studied” these movies to see what leadership lessons we can extract from them.

THEIR SYNONYS
To those who are not familiar with these movies, here is a simple synopsis. Bujang Lapok is a comedy that focuses on three lowly bachelors, i.e. Ramli, Aziz and Sudin played by P. Ramlee, Aziz Sattar and S. Shamsuddin respectively. Together they rent a room from the beautiful Cik Normah whom they refer to as tuan rumah (landlady). The plot revolves around these three best friends trying to find a wife. This movie was so popular that there were several sequels; continuing with the lives alone in a village in Cameron Highlands, depicting the culture and social lives of Seniman Bujang Lapok.

Bujang Lapok

After reluctantly agreeing to the wedding, Uncle Chuan, along with Benji, embark on a cross country trip to personally hand-deliver wedding invitation cards to Uncle Chuan’s primary school friends. It is told against the backdrop of Malaysian Chinese culture as the story is set during the Chinese New Year celebration. Now that the simple synopsis is done, let’s take a look at some leadership lessons we can uncover in these two Malaysian-made movies. As usual, there will be some spoilers ahead!

ENVISION
The first lesson we can learn from both Bujang Lapok and The Journey is having a vision or an objective to achieve. As cliché as it sounds, in order to make a company or organisation great, there must be a clear vision for all those involved to strive for.

In the movies, the objective of the three bachelors is to gain a significant other. Sudin wanted to marry Zaitun, Aziz protected and then fell in love with Sapiah and throughout the movie, Ramli was dating one girl after another. All three of them were in the pursuit of getting a life companion. The main objective in The Journey, on the other hand, is about inviting all of Uncle Chuan’s remaining primary school friends to his daughter’s wedding.

The most interesting aspect about The Journey is the lack of communication between Uncle Chuan and Benji. The fact that neither speaks the other’s language made it difficult for them to get along. Nonetheless, they still managed to achieve their objective, even with the language barrier. They were both aware of the goal of their trip, which helped them navigate their way and towards understanding one another as well.

COMMUNICATE CLEARLY
Clear communication is a very important element in any organisation. Hand signals help, too. Keep in mind that there are countless ways for a message to be conveyed. As shown by Cik Normah in Bujang Lapok, she managed to talk some sense into Zaitun’s and Sudin’s mothers after they quarreled.

Once she focused the conversation on the marriage of Sudin and Zaitun, they became civil and calm. I bet you can think of some meetings in which you wished were more focused.

PERSEVERE
One main theme that was portrayed quite subtly in both movies is the value of perseverance. All the characters from both movies had to persevere through many obstacles in order to achieve their goals. In The Journey, Benji had to endure the clash of cultures with his future father-in-law, which made it difficult to marry Ah Bee. The tradition of sending invitation cards by hand that led them to travel all over Malaysia was quite a challenge; even more so doing it with Uncle Chuan who does not speak English. As for the unmarried men in Bujang Lapok, Aziz had to save Sapiah from drowning and also face the wrath of her father.

Meanwhile, Sudin had difficulty finding the dowry to marry Zaitun. With the help of Uncle Chuan’s friends in The Journey, and Ramli and Cik Normah in Bujang Lapok, all of them managed to overcome these obstacles.

In most business, it is a marathon, not a race. Therefore leaders with persevering spirits are the ones who succeed. They must also have the humility to ask for help when it is needed.

THINKING OUT OF THE BOX
The last lesson we can take away from these two classic Malaysian movies is to think out of the ordinary. For example, at the climax of The Journey, the whole gang of classmates, with Benji, wanted to honour the memory of their deceased class monitor by making a hot air balloon out of plastic bags, as it was his dream to ride one.

Therefore, Uncle Chuan, along with one of his classmates, rode the hot air balloon whilst carrying the urn containing the ashes of their dear friend. As for Bujang Lapok, Ramli got the idea of paving a real diamond ring and exchanging it with a fake one in order to get the dowry needed by Sudin to marry Zaitun.

In the end, it is all about creating meaningful relationships that benefits one’s life.

From Bujang Lapok 57 years ago, to The Journey in 2014, the theme of family, friendship and culture stays alive in the he(art) of Malaysian movies.

I personally hope future film-makers will stay true to these values for the benefit of all Malaysians.

Have a wonderful Malaysia Day!

Yasir Osman is a part of the youth division of Leaderonomics that is passionate about inspiring youths towards leadership excellence. He is in Youth Media that creates videos and internet content for leadership development. He also plays a part in developing young leaders through a series of camps known as the OIODE Camps. If you are interested in developing yourself as a young leader, you can email him at yasir.osman@leaderonomics.com or visit our website at http://www.leaderonomics.com/diodecamps/ https://mail.google.com/mail/u/1/images/cleardot.gif
Building Malaysia together

By LIM LAY HSUAN

Tell us about your family and educational background.

As a Kelabit child, I grew up in Bario. My childhood was certainly an interesting experience. Living in the thick Borneo rainforest, there were no shortcuts to reach the nearest town except on foot, on a long five-day walk.

I’ve always wondered what it would be like to journey into “the world beyond the mountains”. Back then, the only way to have a glimpse of this “world” was to read story books left by the British soldiers. Some of my early favourite authors were Jack London, John Steinbeck, Ernest Hemingway, William Saroyan and Morris West.

Reading provided me the ultimate adventure and heightened my curiosity on what was happening beyond our jungles, which translated into a thirst for knowledge.

When I was in primary school, our classrooms had mud floors. We had to use tablets (nowadays definition of tablets!) and chalk instead of books and pens.

However, even with the lack of proper facilities, we were all very committed, both the teachers and students, and even achieved a 100% pass rate.

I was privileged to have my father as my school teacher, who also happened to be the school principal and a disciplinarian at home.

Today, I am very happy to see that the schools in Bario have much better facilities. For the Kelabit students who live and study in towns, they have even better facilities, more books to read and access to the Internet.

However, I hope our students will continue to have the desire to excel in their studies. Without the discipline of action, no matter how good the facilities or teachers are, you will not achieve success.

Describe your journey thus far, i.e., from humble beginnings in Sarawak to an agent of transformation for the country.

For almost 10 years, I was in the corporate life. The KPI (key performance indicator) for the private sector is the profit and loss (P&L) statements.

Stepping into my current role, it’s no longer about the P&L. In the Government, you look at providing services to improve outcomes for the rakyat. The KPI for the Government is how it can deliver to benefit the rakyat.

The challenge is enormous – whether turning around MAS with 19,000 employees or transforming a country with 14.3 million civil servants.

It will require tremendous skill, leadership, engagement and the support of everyone to ensure that it works.

When I was tasked with this job, I realized that the Government was serious about social and economic transformation of this country. It was made clear that people must come first.

Various media analyses and opinion polls were conducted to ask the public what improvements and changes they want for the country.

That was how the six NKRA (National Key Result Areas) through the Government Transformation Programme (GTP) were established.

How is the integration between Peninsular Malaysia and Sabah and Sarawak?

Let me start by saying that in Malaysia today, there are two issues:

- Problems to be solved.
- Polarities to be managed.

We cannot possibly solve every issue. Instead we can use the middle ground to resolve problems and manage polarities. The leadership of this country is doing its best in addressing these challenges.

But in a diverse society like Malaysia, there will always be differences. The trick is to effectively manage the differences and compromise by moderating extreme views.

The key here is inclusiveness, i.e. to include each other in resolving issues.

Some insights on Sabah and Sarawak’s role in helping Malaysia achieve Vision 2020.

I think Sabah and Sarawak help achieve Vision 2020 in these areas:

- Both states produce the bulk of Malaysia’s oil and gas (O&G) output. For many years, Malaysia has and will continue to benefit from O&G contribution from Sabah and Sarawak.
- Sabah and Sarawak are model states when we talk about 1Malaysia. People in the peninsula can learn from their “give and take” (rather than “my way is the only way”) attitude when it comes to ethnic and religious relations.
- Essentially, moderation is a norm in Sabah and Sarawak.
- More importantly, Sabahans and Sarawakians are Malaysians. We all contribute to the unity of Malaysia.

When it comes to interests pertaining to Sabah and Sarawak, what have we done right, and what can be improved?

Clearly, education is a national priority. The goal is to bridge the urban–rural divide and to give equal access, facilities and quality education to all.

To achieve Vision 2020, we need radical improvements in education. This can happen when our students excel and be highly competitive at national and international levels.

Through our NKRA initiatives, we’ve seen tremendous changes in Malaysia, including Sabah and Sarawak. We are equipping schools with better facilities.

In Sarawak, for example, between 2010 and 2013, 641 new pre-schools have been set up, launching grants were given to 27 private pre-schools totaling RM280,000, and RM1.44mil were given to SeDikid centres and 17,270 students across 30 districts benefited from pre-school fee assistance, totaling RM9.93mil.

Another example of an exemplary role model school in Malaysia is Sekolah Kebangsaan Ulu Lubai in Limbang, Sarawak.

It is the first rural school in the country to attain the HPS (high performance school) status, was a nominee for the Unesco Education Best Practice Award 2010 and since 2006, it had attained 100% passes in the UPSR examination.

Multiple awards won include the Commonwealth Good Practice Champions Award in 2009, five national education awards, 14 state awards and 26 district awards.

The approach of doing things have to change. We have started removing bureaucracy where needed.

Instead, we allow the rakyat to have full access to the Government, in line with the 1Malaysia concept of ‘People First, Performance Now’.

Your personal aspiration for Malaysia?

One of my favourite authors, Helen Keller said, “Keep your face to the sunshine and you’ll never see shadows.” In life, I prefer to keep things simple. Sometimes, the toughest challenges can be solved fairly easily. What’s important is to look at the bigger picture and not get too caught up in the details.

1Malaysia is not just about unity. It is about leveraging each other’s strengths; only then can you become a champion. Vision 2020 is the place where we would like to be but we must first unite and include each other to be successful.

What inspires you to do what you’re doing now?

Nothing is more satisfying and inspiring than to see people grow as leaders in the process.

John Ruskin once said, “The greatest reward from a man’s toil is not what he gets from it, but what he becomes of it.”

The transformation will give birth to new leaders from the civil service. When you create a safe environment where people can discuss openly, you will discover hidden talents and potential leaders. As they fully mature as leaders, you transit from taking a directive leadership stance to an empowering approach.

The biggest achievement is to see the personal development of people. We take this approach as we challenge civil servants during problem-solving meetings.

What’s the significance of Malaysia Day to you?

A day to remember when Sabah and Sarawak became partners in the formation of Malaysia.

How do you describe a true Malaysian?

Someone who would do anything to make this country proud, someone with undivided loyalty to protect the nation in all aspects, regardless of his or her socio-economic background.

1Malaysia is more than a symbol – it’s behavioural.

Malaysia at its first level, where “we tolerate one another”. At Level 2, “we accept one another”. Beyond this level, we should move to Level 3 to “celebrate each other”, including celebrating our differences.

If we reach all three levels, we will find a society that is truly valuable. In my opinion, that is how we integrate a society and be united as true Malaysians.

Your message to all Malaysians this Malaysia Day?

Let me start by saying that in Malaysia, everyone has a chance to become a champion.

When starting Pemandu, I can safely admit that there’s a time the silent majority speak out loud and have their voices heard.

Share your Malaysia Day thoughts at editor@leaderonomics.com. To access more stories, visit www.leaderonomics.com

EDITOR’S NOTE:

We wish to congratulate Datuk Seri Idris Jala on his appointment as chief executive officer of Pemandu (Performance Management and Delivery Unit) and former managing director of Malaysia Airlines (MAS). As I researched further, I found that Pemandu was established on Sept 16, 2009 (yes, on Malaysia Day).

Pemandu was established on Sept 16, 2009 (yes, on Malaysia Day). The director of MAS, a name that came to mind was Datuk Seri Idris Jala, chief executive officer of Pemandu (Performance Management and Delivery Unit) and former managing director of Malaysia Airlines (MAS). As I researched further, I found that Pemandu was established on Sept 16, 2009 (yes, on Malaysia Day).
WAS THAT A BLINK OR A WINK?

YOUR BODY LANGUAGE SPEAKS VOLUMES ABOUT YOU (PART II)

By WENDY LEE
editor@leaderonomics.com

N July, I posed five points on some of the lessons learnt from the body language of our workshop participants who attend corporate trainings. If you missed it, do access it online at the link below.

Here’s the continuation:

6

IS YOUR BODY ANGLED TOWARDS THE SPEAKER?

How you sit with your fellow team-mates sends a signal of whether you are on good terms with them. Your body will automatically angle away if you are disengaged with certain individuals. This aura of “disconnected-ness” might continue during gatherings, such as lunch, whereby you will find yourself preferring to sit or talk with other people.

LESSON: When you find yourself not ready to make peace or see eye-to-eye with a colleague, it might help at that moment to take a seat that is not directly opposite that person.

Instead, try sitting diagonally from that person to diffuse the “confrontation”.

However, in a working environment, always maintain a good and professional working relationship with each other and not let trivial matters ruin the dynamics of a team.

7

ARE YOU STANDING NEAR OR AWAY FROM THE SPEAKER?

During group activities, whenever participants are asked to gather round, the extroverts are usually the first to get up and take quick, bold steps towards me.

On the other hand, introverts tend to take slower, smaller steps and place themselves not far from their seats.

LESSON: Understand that everyone has a unique personality and we ought to embrace the person for who he or she is. Perhaps, as the speaker, you can encourage the introverts to step forward a little because “you don’t bite”.

The speaker should always encourage and not impose or look down on those who are not too comfortable being close to the speaker.

If you have the liberty to move about while presenting, make yourself approachable by engaging and moving nearer to those who are “far away” from you.

This gives a good impression that you are also including them as your participants and that the introverts matter too.

8

DO YOU KEEP STILL OR CONSTANTLY FIDGET?

One of the best indicators of participants needing a break during trainings is when people start looking at their wrist watch, twirling their pencils or flicking through their workbooks (a common sign to check on how much more there is to go before the session ends).

We also know boredom has probably kicked in when participants keep glancing at their mobile phones, or when their eyes begin looking to the door, as if hoping for someone to interrupt the class.

LESSON: Pen-twirling, foot-tapping, and leg-shaking can be distracting to the speaker and may divert the attention of other participants during a training session.

As a speaker, look out for these “boredom” cues and be graceful enough to initiate a five-minute break for them to leave the training room and freshen up.

Otherwise, grab their attention by asking all of them to stand up and do some small stretching exercises to help them stay alert.

9

HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU YAWNED?

The two criteria which are my must-haves in any training sessions are:

- The lights must be bright – preferably white lights, and
- The air-conditioner must be cold.

Our environment has a measurable impact on body language and the way it is displayed and observed.

If the room is filled with warm and yellow lights, or if the air-conditioner is not working properly, then we notice people starting to yawn, especially after lunch.

Even the seating layout has an impact on participants. With a classroom, theatre-styled seating, people tend to fold their arms more; whereas with cluster seating, participants tend to smile and talk more with one another.

LESSON: For participants, if you feel tired, do excuse yourself to go to the washroom to freshen up. Stretching your hands and legs discretely helps too.

Try to resist the urge to look sleepy by yawning, slumping over and sliding your body down. It would not reflect well on yourself, and it certainly is not respectful to the speaker.

10

HOW DO YOU LOOK?

Your body sends a message to everyone whether you are comfortable with yourself or not. This is body language at its most basic and, as such, often overlooked.

There are many subtle indicators that tell other people about us. Often times, we consciously and subconsciously judge others based on what we see.

If you are an overweight person, for example, you would often assume the person indulges in food, whereas someone with a fit physique probably has self-discipline.

Of course, not all stereotypes are true. We wouldn’t know their entire history until we get to know them on a personal level.

There is also no evidence to say that men with thick eyebrows are untrustworthy or that women with “boyish” looking haircuts are unfe-mine.

Most importantly, ask yourself this question, are you comfortable in your own skin?

LESSON: Our physical bodies are often testaments to our lifestyles and our health. Ensure that your health is well taken care of.

When you are in the peak of your health, your radiance and confidence will automatically show even with minimal grooming and make-up.

If you worry about body odour, you can always fix it by bringing a deodorant spray.

Your body language not only sends powerful messages to those around you, but it also sends powerful messages to your brain, which in turn influences your attitude.

This is through a concept called neuro-linguistic programming, a concept that focuses on how the mind and body can influence beliefs and feelings.

Think of it as a form of self-talk. If you say positive things to yourself, you are more likely to start believing those positive things.

The same holds true for your body language and what it says to you. So the next time you feel a little nervous, stand up straight, slow down your pace, breathe, and soon you will find the butterflies in your stomach slowly disappearing.

All the best!

Wendy Lee is president of Mabic (Malaysian Association of Brand & Image Consultants) and a director of BII (Brand Image International Institute). She is a firm believer that with style, there must be substance! For the first instalment of Body Language by Wendy Lee, do check out myleaderonomics.com
3 REASONS WHY THE BEST LEADERS ARE LEARNERS

By ABEL CHEAH
editor@leaderonomics.com

On September 13, 2014, at a youth camp, a student who had been put out of charge of his group confided in me that leading his team members wasn’t going as well as he had thought it would. “I’m just not cut out to be a leader,” he said, as he related to me what he thought a leader should have, which he didn’t: humour, confidence, wisdom and courage.

My reply to him, as one still understanding the ropes of what it truly means to lead was, “all these can be learnt, if you put your heart into it.”

It is said that there are approximately 50,000 books on leadership that are published annually – and this number may well be a conservative estimate – but if there is one indication that there is no final “destination” in this journey of becoming a leader, it is the countless number of resources that teach us how to better develop our awareness and management of ourselves and others.

Leadership is a relational endeavour; one cannot claim to be “good” at this without being able to inspire an action or a reaction in others. And because relationships are complex, one can only lead to the extent that he or she learns.

On the surface, it is painfully obvious that learning is imperative for any human enterprise – but I’d argue that in the long run, learning qualifies you to lead more than anything else (beyond promotions, positions, placement and power).

Here are three reasons why:

1. **Learning Equalises the Years**

How often have you heard the Chinese adage (often spoken by the elderly to the young), “I eat more salt than you eat rice”? What is it about being “older” that makes one a wiser and better decision-maker? I’m convinced that the difference is not a matter of “years”, but a matter of “experience”. We learn from our experiences, and our past outcomes that resulted in both positive and negative actions inform us as we negotiate between present choices. But if experiences make us wiser, how do we attain more “experience”? Is “experience” purely a byproduct of the passing years, or can we, in the words of Sir Isaac Newton, see further into the future “by standing on the shoulders of giants”?

When we capitalise on the learnings and lessons of others and apply them in our lives, we are able to short-circuit the common bond of “years equals to experience” and accelerate our growth without wasting the time others have wasted.

Great leaders often ask themselves, “How can I avoid making the same mistakes, or how can I replicate others’ successes and take them further?”

2. **Learning Keeps You Humble**

Learning and humility feed off each other. On the other hand, the antithesis of humility, which is pride, has the sinister ability to deceive anyone into believing that he or she has “arrived”, that there is no need to adapt or change further, because he or she is superior and above reproach.

In contrast, great leaders are often the most humble people who are secure in themselves and do not see the need to put others down to elevate themselves. John F. Kennedy once said “leadership and learning are indispensable to each other”.

Interestingly, most US Presidents were avid readers who invested much of their time in learning, despite their busy schedules. It is said that Theodore Roosevelt read two books a day, while Abraham Lincoln, who had only one year of formal education, attributed his successful political career to his habit of reading.

A strong learning posture allows you to see from different perspectives, live in the experiences of others, and most importantly, empathise with other points of view.

It is only when a person is an avid learner that he or she is continually challenged in his or her current views, and thus able to grow in convictions. It is only when a cup is empty that it can be filled.

Maintaining humility allows us to be intellectually curious – and curiosity always precedes discovery and creativity.

3. **Learning Enables You to Give**

Somewhere during my college years, an epiphany occurred to me: How much can I learn and grow, if I were to dedicate all my transit and waiting moments to learning something new? In my frustration of waiting and chasing for buses to get to college, I found a treasure chest. I had realised that an average Kuala Lumpur/Klang Valley resident would spend approximately 10 to 15 hours per week travelling, either by inching through heavy traffic or waiting at bus stops and light rail transit (LRT) stations, and what a waste of time it would be if all that time was given to staring into space or letting one’s thoughts run idle.

I then made a concrete decision to listen to podcasts, audio books (when I would be driving) or to read (when I was waiting for the bus or LRT), in order to redeem that precious time. I have since listened to over 700 hours of podcasts on topics related to public speaking, general knowledge, story-telling, leadership, faith and personal development.

My greatest learning moments are no longer in the classroom, but in my car, when I am alone and can learn something new. During the course of the last two years, as a teacher in a high-needs school and a church leader, these moments of learning and reflection allowed me to pass on what I learnt to my students and congregation.

These opportunities gave me great pleasure, as I was communicating to others what I had learnt and internalised for myself. I never felt “burnt out” because the stream of learning was always flowing. Leadership may have many faces, but all leaders have the same outstretched hand of giving. And we can only give from what we have learnt. The good news is that leadership can be learnt – if we put our hearts to it.

Abel Cheah is associate managing editor in the Talent Acquisition team at Teach For Malaysia. He believes that leadership is something that is nurtured and cultivated. If you are interested in listening to podcasts, he highly recommends Umaro (an app that narrates articles). He believes that the best leaders are great lovers of learning. You can get in touch with him at editor@leaderonomics.com.
ME AGAINST MY BRAIN
HOW TO OVERCOME A CREATIVE BLOCK

By HYMA PILLAY
hyma.pillay@leaderonomics.com

S

o picture this, I’m sitting in front of my computer and I have my MP3 player set to my favourite music playlist. I’m equipped with my caffeine boost, I have my Batman figurine in front of me (for inspiration, so don’t judge me) and I’m all set to churn out an article for the next issue of this pullout.

There I am, staring blankly at my computer screen, waiting for an idea – something refreshing, something new. Anything...

However, it is at this exact time that my brain decides to focus on dancing potatoes in sunglasses. As a writer, this is not an unusual phenomenon. We call this writer’s block.

I’m sure many of you can relate to this, whether it’s when you have an assignment to finish, or a new project pitch to prepare, or a new poster to design.

We all have these moments when our brains refuse to come out and play. So how do we overcome this?

Here is a list of useful tips!

1 CLEAR YOUR MIND

It is difficult to get the creative juices flowing when you have a mind clogged with overlapping thoughts. Before you start work, clear your mind of any distractions so you would have a better focus. One way to do this is a simple breathing exercise. Try this:

**STEP 1:** Standing up straight and exhale.
**STEP 2:** Keep your belly muscles relaxed, and inhale. Concentrate on filling your belly with air. Once your belly is completely filled with air, keep on breathing, expanding your chest and rib cage.
**STEP 3:** Hold your breath for a few seconds.
**STEP 4:** Exhale as slowly as possible, while keeping your chest and rib cage relaxed, pulling your belly in to force out remaining air.
**STEP 5:** Repeat the process a few times till you feel calm.

As you do this exercise, close your eyes and concentrate on your breathing. You will subconsciously clear your mind while focusing on your breathing.

2 STOCK UP ON IDEAS

We are at an age where accessibility to information is so high. We read, hear and see new things on almost a daily basis. Each time you come across something really interesting, capture it! If you like, you could keep an idea journal so you can write down all the interesting and eye-catching information you come across, and then you can go back and read them from time to time.

These little things that you find could lead you to generating bigger and brilliant ideas!

3 CHANGE YOUR ATMOSPHERE

Sometimes we feel saturated, overwhelmed. If you’re having a creative block, take a step back, and relax. Give yourself a break, go for a walk, coffee or dance your heart out to a song – just do something random which allows your brain to rest for a while.

Once your mind is relaxed, you’ll find that it’s easier to get your thought process back on track.

Which is what I am going to do now, so I’ll leave you guys to explore with your creative juices! Until my next article!

Hyma Pillay is operations lead for the Leaderonomics editorial team. She was inspired to write this article because she was facing a writer’s block on a different topic. For more articles by Hyma, visit www.leaderonomics.com

Also next week

Managing change and cultural transformation
A new approach at work. How to embrace it
I’d like a Pegasus now please, and here’s why
Leadership with a human touch