WORKING AND STUDYING?
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CARD-CARRYING STUDENTS

ONE of the great things I remember about graduate school was the multitude of “mature students” we had. School administration was not implying that the rest of us were not mature (I think) but chose to respectfully refer to students who had already worked for several decades, or had a lifetime of experiences under their belt as such.

Working on assignments with mature students was GREAT because there were so many practical lessons to learn. Mostly, I loved the fact that they didn’t see their age as a barrier to going back to school.

There were also the courageous few who, having set themselves the target of entering medical school, clearly demonstrated why many on

employee engagement in Asia-Pacific.

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

Editor: KAREN NEOH

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PECTIVE-TIME TURNER

By SARAH TAN
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HOW often have you wished that you could get hold of Hermione’s Time Turner, from the Harry Potter books? Or, if you aren’t a Harry Potter fan, how many times have you wished that you could turn back time?

Picture this: you’ve procrastinated on your work for weeks, and your deadline is in two days. You’re panicking, because how on earth are you going to read the unabridged version of 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea in just two days?

To avoid future mishaps, here are some tips on managing your time wisely.

DROP YOUR TO-DO LIST
Pick up an appointment book instead. Rather than continuously adding onto a list that will go on and on, specifically schedule time to complete your pending tasks.

Schedule the time duration you should spend on your task, and commit to following it religiously. If you prefer a more tech-savvy approach, use Google Calendar or your phone’s calendar.

SET SHORT BREAKS
When you start scheduling your tasks, don’t go crazy! Short breaks are necessary to keep your motivation and focus levels up.

Everyone works differently, so tailor your schedule to your method of working.

For example, some people work in bursts — doing work non-stop for certain hours, then needing a long break before starting again. Meanwhile, others might need a more structured approach to working.

1. “Think ahead. Don’t let day-to-day operations drive out planning.” — Donald Rumsfeld

2. “Lost time is never found again.” — Benjamin Franklin

3. “Know the true value of time; snatch, seize, and enjoy every moment of it. No idleness, no laziness, no procrastination: never put off till tomorrow what you can do today.” — Philip Stanhope

4. “Lack of direction, not lack of time, is the problem. We all have 24-hour days.” — Zig Ziglar

5. “Concentrate all your thoughts upon the work at hand. The sun’s rays do not burn until brought to a focus.” — Alexander Graham Bell

CONCENTRATE ON YOUR TASK

In a Salary.com survey carried out in 2012, 64% of its 3,200 participants admitted that they visit non-work related websites every day during work hours.

Thirty-nine per cent of them spend less than one hour a week on non-work related items, whilst 31% spend more than 10 hours on them.

To maximise your efficiency, devote yourself to your task. Work wherever you’re most comfortable with, turn off or put away distracting items (mobile phones or random items on your desk) and keep strictly to the time allotted!

If your work requires the use of your computer and you’re afraid that you may be tempted to browse other websites, there are many website blocker programmes found online that promote productivity.

JUST SAY ‘NO’
There’s no shame in whipping out your “Just Say No” card! Don’t try to take on more tasks than you’re able to. If you’re invited out by your friends during a busy time, try to reschedule.

By prioritising your tasks, you can then gauge what you can handle and when you can put them on hold for a movie night out.

Achieving this balance of work and play not only takes a load of stress off your shoulders, but also allows you to actually have sufficient time for yourself and your loved ones.

All the best on your journey of better time management!

KAREN NEOH
Editor
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Please provide your full name, occupation (designation and employer) and telephone number.

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HUMILITY TAKES YOU FAR

A FINANCE DIRECTOR’S JOURNEY WITH CIMA

By PREMA JAYABALAN
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SINCE young, Penang-born Mahendran Kapuppial always knew that he wanted to do something which involved numbers. “When I was young, my brother-in-law’s friend, an accountant, used to come over and play darts with him. He was my role model then, simply because he was sharp and used to strategise well while playing this game. In fact, he used a calculator to help him win the game. I remember telling myself that I was going to be like him,” reminisces Mahendran. And why not? The finance director of Kimberly-Clark Trading (M) Sdn Bhd, he then worked in Kellogg’s South-East Asia for 11 years, followed by Guinness Anchor Bhd (GAB), before taking up his current position as finance director with Kimberly-Clark Trading. He says that the lessons learnt from CIMA has helped pave way for a successful career. “The current finance field is inclusive of financial accounting, financial control and business control. Business control is where you work as a business partner with your stakeholders. You add a lot of analytics behind numbers and CIMA caters to that very nicely.”

Mahendran’s first job after obtaining his CIMA qualification was as a management trainee, which evolved into a managerial position with Motorola. This was back in the 1990s. He was with Motorola for about two years. “Motorola was a great start for my career. It is a renowned multinational corporation with a structured environment. I was placed in a specified area in finance where I was tasked to look after fund management. I was young, a fresh graduate and eager to learn everything.”

The one important thing that Mahendran learnt on his first job was the importance of tactfulness. Having entered an organisation as a trainee who eventually became a young boss to senior staff, he was learning a lot from people who were his seniors. “I had to be respectful at all times. You have to understand the values of being independent, disciplined and respectful at all times. I believe my hard work in my early days has got me to where I am today,” he concludes with this sound advice.

The CIMA Influence

After Motorola, Mahendran joined Federal Flour Mills Bhd and Pacific Ship Managers Sdn Bhd. He then worked in Kellogg’s South-East Asia for 11 years, followed by Guinness Anchor Bhd (GAB), before taking up his current position as finance director with Kimberly-Clark Trading. He says that the lessons learnt from CIMA has helped pave way for a successful career. “The current finance field is inclusive of financial accounting, financial control and business control. Business control is where you work as a business partner with your stakeholders. You add a lot of analytics behind numbers and CIMA caters to that very nicely.”

One of Mahendran’s favourite courses during his CIMA days was strategic planning and marketing. This course teaches you to gain perspectives of the overall market dynamics and to see how your business can fit into it. “CIMA played an important part during my days at GAB. When I started in 2011, there were new capital projects taking place in GAB which required proper strategy and planning. These scenarios were similar to the types of situations that I was exposed to, in the case studies that I took in CIMA. Hence, when I was faced with a real-life situation at work, I applied what I had learnt at CIMA and it turned out to be beneficial for GAB and fruitful for my career,” says Mahendran on one of the valuable lessons learnt.

Mahendran adds that through its various networking events, CIMA has been keeping all members connected even after graduation. “We touch base at these events and this really helps us engage with each other and further develop our careers.”

People and Values Matter

For Mahendran, some of the important attributes that has a bearing on one’s career is the need to have commercial sense, especially when, for example speaking to directors and chief executive officers. He tries to put himself in their shoes to further understand the company’s direction. He then works on ways to help the company achieve its goals. He believes that commercial sense and the act of treating the business as if it is one’s own is crucial to achieving optimum success.

Besides that, good people management skills are crucial as well. Being a smart cookie in your job is one thing but to get things done, you need support from your team. “I believe in putting yourself in other people’s shoes and being more understanding. The higher you go up the ladder, the more important teamwork is.” Mahendran also states that being a good communicator will ensure a smooth flow of the company’s strategy.

Important Lessons Learnt

1. Never assume you know everything. There is always something new to learn each day.
2. Respect everyone in your life regardless of their age, gender or status.
3. Be disciplined. Apply this to even the simplest things in your life, such as making your bed every morning.
4. Commitment is vital to succeed. Never do anything half-heartedly. Go all out when attempting something and you will definitely excel in it.
5. Be present, in terms of body, mind and soul at whichever situation you are in. For example, don’t let your mind wander off thinking about work when you are physically present and playing with your child.

Mahendran believes that his hard work in the early days has benefited him much.

Brought to you by CIMA

Chartered Institute of Management Accountants

I BELIEVE IN PUTTING YOURSELF IN OTHER PEOPLE’S SHOES AND BEING MORE UNDERSTANDING. THE HIGHER YOU GO UP THE LADDER, THE MORE IMPORTANT TEAMWORK IS.
JOURNEY OF A LIFELONG LEARNER
FULL-TIME STUDENT, FULL-TIME WORK

By KAREN NEOH
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In my last job, I had the opportunity to meet hundreds of very interesting and inspiring people – all leaders in their own right. If you are not new to our career guide, you would know that leaders are defined in different ways.

Today, I would like to consider the leaders who have decided to really take charge of their destinies, by having a clear vision of where they want to be, charting the path and executing a strategy that included sacrifices.

The person I would like to introduce is a mild-mannered gentleman, learned and highly intelligent, purpose-driven and inspiring, Yuichi Saito, who readily agreed to share his journey with our readers.

So Yuichi-san, tell us about yourself.

I’ve been working in the medical device sector of Johnson & Johnson for 15 years. I’m based in my home country, Japan. Although I am Japanese, I grew up in Paris, France when I was in elementary school, so I have learnt diverse cultures from young.

Recently I completed an international MBA (Master of Business Administration) course at the University of Tsukuba, Tokyo and aspire to contribute to the medical device industry in a senior management role in the future.

What was your career path?

I was a sales representative in Japan for eight years, following which I was based in our headquarters in the United States (US) an assignment as a sales training manager for new hires.

After one year, I returned to Japan as a product marketing manager and then as Asia-Pacific regional marketing manager. Currently, I am the strategy and product pipeline management manager in Japan.

You certainly have covered much ground. Did you find the changes very challenging?

I would like to share my challenge when moving from my role in Japan to the Asia-Pacific regional role. My first challenge was English and communicating with native English speakers. As many people know about Japan, almost 100% of communication is in Japanese.

People living in most Asian countries (like Malaysia) can speak several languages, thus whilst most of my counterparts could understand my challenging situation, my Australian counterparts could not understand it.

Fortunately, our company had a big new product launch initiative in Australia six months after my assignment started, so I had the opportunity to build strong relationships with them.

What do you find exciting about your role in marketing with this international healthcare company?

Healthcare business is not simple because interactions are face-to-face, live human communication. Most businesses have been simplified by electronic communication, but healthcare deals with patients who receive care from medical doctors.

Hence, people in the industry, like myself, must have the human element, and not purely be a businessman.

I love this aspect of humanity in our business and am really excited to create win-win situations for the patients-doctors-industry.

Why did you decide to pursue the MBA programme?

Honestly, the MBA degree has not been recognised by the Japanese society because most Japanese companies hire new college graduates, and employees continue to work with their first company till they are 60 years old (same kind of trend in multinational companies in Japan as well). This means a company is a part of the employees’ lives – like a family.

By the same token, for a long time I believed that the MBA degree was not necessary for me. But when I transferred to the Asia-Pacific regional market-management role, I was the only employee who didn’t have an MBA and my daily work required strategic thinking which used specific thinking tools.

That situation was my motivation for pursuing the MBA course. I found a perfect business school which is located in the city centre of Tokyo. Tsukuba MBA in International Business (MBA-IB) is 100% English and classes are offered by multinational professors. Also, 30% of the students come from other countries, so I could study in a similar environment as those in US business schools.

Another good thing was that the course offered classes on weekend nights and full day Saturdays, thus there was no need to quit my job. Also, University of Tsukuba is a national university so its tuition is really inexpensive compared with other schools.

How did you cope with the heavy demands of studying and working full-time?

My supervisor, who is based in Mumbai, understood my motivation to study in a business school, so he allowed me to manage my overseas travelling schedule.

My school offered core classes on Saturday and elective classes on weekdays so I could control it easily. Still, there were times I had to miss classes. Actually, my first year was very tough. My average sleeping time was three hours a day (sleeping at 1am and waking up at 4am) and at times I had to study overnight before submitting reports.

Especially since I am a non-native English speaker, it took much time to read case studies (usually Harvard Business School cases) and writing reports.

Now that you have graduated, are you looking forward to having more time with your family?

Sure. Now I’m happy to spend weekends with no specific tasks with my family!

Your message to the young people and professionals of Malaysia:

Tsukuba MBA-IB is a really diverse international business school. If you are interested in studying in Japan, I believe it is the best school. One of our professors is Malaysian and the school has a credit exchange programme with a business school in Malaysia. Do consider it, and “look east” again!

EAT-WORK-STUDY

Effective leaders recognise that life-long learning is a must, and though it can happen everyday in an informal way, I take my hat off to those who commit to studying while working full-time. Congratulations Yuichi-san!

Karen is a student of the university of life who maintains a childhood curiosity and gets over-excited about programmes like ‘how stuff is made’. For more articles on leadership, visit www.leaderonomics.com
Making the Most of Second Chances

IN January 1999, mountaineers Jamie Andrew and Jamie Fisher were trapped for five nights on the storm-bound icy summit of a French mountain. Their rescue, one of the most dramatic in the history of the Alps, tragically came only hours too late to save Fisher. Andrew, despite suffering hypothermia and appalling frostbite, survived, but at great personal cost. Ten days later, both his hands and his feet, damaged beyond repair by frostbite, were amputated.

He quickly learnt to walk again and master all the everyday tasks that we normally take for granted. In less than four months, he was able to leave the hospital, move back home and return to work as the manager of a small company. Since then Andrew has defied all expectations by running marathons, completing an Iron Man triathlon, skiing, snowboarding, sailing, and of course, returning to climbing the mountains that he loves so much. Largely, he has raised 10s of thousands of pounds for charity and received many awards.

Andrew is an inspiring speaker who tells his story with great passion, sincerity and humour. The result is a talk which is at once gripping, inspiring and ultimately uplifting.

He uses his skills as a mountaineer and his experiences to great effect in putting across principles that are directly applicable to successful business practice. With over 13 years’ experience of speaking in more than 30 countries on five continents, Andrew has worked with many businesses and training organisations. He is also a regular presenter for The International Institute of Management Development in Switzerland.

I am truly inspired by how when faced with life’s challenges, you have met them head-on. After recovering, did you feel fear the first time you faced another mountain? How did you overcome that?

When I had the accident, I dealt with it by talking about what happened especially with loved ones, friends and family. At the beginning, it was very difficult, but the more I spoke about it, the easier it became. Because my friend died and I was the lucky one, I realised that I was given a second chance and had to make the most of it. Not just for myself, but also for Jamie (Fisher).

So I began the process of coming to terms with what happened. Going back to the mountain was the final part – confronting the demons that I had in my head about this terrible accident.

It was hard but I wanted to see the place where the tragedy took place. The mountains were not to blame. It was a human tragedy and I needed to draw a line and move forward.

I am sorry for dredging up your pain and making you relive it Jamie. The more I talk about it, the more cathartic it is. Before I knew it, I was asked to speak at events. It was also very painful and emotional but the more I talked, the more I was in control of my emotions.

Coming to Malaysia to share my story – it is almost my pleasure to share. I don’t really like to listen to the sound of my own voice and it’s not that my ego won’t let me shut up. I talk genuinely and love to see the reaction I get from people. It’s a great opportunity my accident has brought me.

You once mentioned that going through different stages of grief is a necessary process, and it is important not to get stuck in a stage. How does one move forward?

It is natural to go through periods of denial, refusing to accept what has happened. I went through a lot of anger at myself. Also at Jamie for not having made it down alive. I tortured myself about how we made the wrong decisions. We were very experienced and we did the best we possibly could. We couldn’t have done better than that.

Thinking about him, I came through my anger and moved to a period of acceptance. I had to find forgiveness. Only then can we start to rebuild – set new goals, ambitions and dreams.

What do you think your life might have been like if the accident never happened?

Before, I was a very passionate mountaineer – an amateur, but relatively directionless. I worked in the UK and Malaysia in industrial rope access usually for construction or maintenance. That was “normal life” to me and I was not destined for anything amazing.

The accident has obviously impacted my life, opening doors of opportunity to share how it is possible to turn negatives to positives, how to turn weaknesses to strengths.

You are a strong believer of mind over matter – would you like to share your lessons learnt?

All challenges we face are 95% mental while physical aspects pale in significance. If you believe you can achieve whatever you set out to, the battle is nearly won. Just believe in yourself.

Setting small, achievable goals and seeing small improvements help you to gradually believe in your long term aspirations. Like preparing for a marathon – start at 1km, then another, and another. It could be slow and it’s not always easy – often it won’t work out. But that’s okay. As long as you set small goals, take one step at a time and train your mind it is possible to achieve your goals.

With which specific leadership quality do you think you are most important to possess in both mountaineering and in an organisation?

The importance of being able to share with other people. As a leader, you need to turn it around and be able to inspire that in other people. To be able to share with them your problems and work things through. Be a good listener, a secure base, and let your people know that they can depend on you to always be there to listen, to share and to talk things through.

Rather than dictatorial, leaders need to understand their staff.

HOPE AND PLANS

I have a wonderful life. My family is the biggest part of that. I want to see my children grow up and achieve the most that they are able to achieve.

I don’t expect them to follow in my footsteps. I would like them to make the most of everything they have been given in life and to realise that they have to work hard.

Personally, I would like to carry on speaking, telling people about my story. I also plan to write another book soon.

I will try to climb the Matterhorn again – so far I reached 250m from the summit but safety first! I ran out of time and came down. I will have another go next year.

Always taking on new challenges, never resting on my laurels for too long.

Karen is humbled not just by all that Jamie has accomplished, but by his generosity in sharing a painful part of his life and turning it around to help others. She wants his wife Anna and his children to know that she is rooting for them every step of the way. For more information on Jamie and his upcoming visit to Malaysia, email iain.lee@leadonomics.com

By KAREN NEOH
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There are points in life when time passes so slowly, with no merit of significance, that one might wonder if it would actually stop, and others when trials and tribulations appear to heap upon themselves that retreating into a little cocoon seems like the best choice.

People often say that the anger and anguish that tend to accompany tragedies are natural, and it is how we act upon or channel these emotions that is important.

Jamie Andrew is the epitome of a chat with Andrew. His humble and unassuming manner, coupled with a positive attitude towards life and its challenges, makes him an extraordinary example of bravery and determination.

I hope you come away as inspired as I was.

Making the Most of Second Chances

By KAREN NEOH
karen.neoh@leadonomics.com

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I hope you come away as inspired as I was.
I’m the choices you make in your youth profoundly influ-
enced to your future and those of your own course.
What you make (divergent) choices or your (convergent)
choices can determine whether you end up with a
unique journey.

Hello again Robin! Do share

I am a third generation Arizona native,
and spent much of my childhood
living inside the Grand Canyon National Park.
I was a very active and athletic kid, and
loved spending my time outdoors and learning
to hike and backpack.

The school’s Orange Grand Canyon
Public School, was unique in the sense
that it was the only public school inside a
national park in the United States.
During the summer we had
been kids from all over the place.
I was born in 1975. I said goodbye
to my family and accepted
an internship and a three-month
exchange to Japan.

I chose Philosophy because I loved the

In college I liked science but was equally
keen on culture. In 1980 I moved to Paris,
where I attended the Sorbonne University.
I chose my major in English literature
and history.

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I married after graduation and worked
for a few years before deciding to

I believe that these three components of

I am extremely fortunate to have very
diverse and passionate people
in my life.

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NO END TO LEARNING
STUDYING FOR CAREER ADVANCEMENT

By IMRAN HASHIM
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FOR most of us, we were told when young to get good a education to secure a good life and future. That somehow was translated into getting a place in a good school, scoring good marks in exams, maybe securing a scholarship, graduating from university, and hopefully landing a job in a big company.

Sound familiar? Well it used to be. It is not that straightforward anymore. Back then, few people bothered to mention one very important step – your career advancement. The truth is learning never stops.

In fact, with the workforce being a lot more competitive than ever before, even a university degree is deemed minimal qualification these days.

More working professionals are looking into adding extra qualifications by doing postgraduate studies or professional exams.

The Government is supportive of this development, allocating RM3bil under the Budget 2015 for sponsoring education.

From this amount, RM1.9bil will be allocated to the Public Services Department, RM759mil to the Education Ministry and RM258mil to the Health Ministry. Through the MyBrain15 Programme, the Government aims to produce 60,000 PhD holders by 2023. In 2015, RM112mil will be allocated for this programme. MyBrain15 Programme, which is currently for the private sector, is proposed to be extended to civil servants and employees of statutory bodies who are keen to further their studies on part-time basis at local higher learning institutions.

The Human Resource Development Fund also plays a part in driving workforce training and development for those who are less inclined to go down the formal education track in favour of accumulating Continuing Professional Education points.

INCENTIVES TO PURSUE POST-DEGREE EDUCATION
Apart from that, there are also monetary incentives in the form of tax deductions (subject to meeting specified conditions):

- Postgraduate education – maximum tax deduction of RM5,000
- Book purchase – maximum tax deduction of RM1,000

With various incentives available, not just limited to locally working professionals but also those all over the world, people are paying more attention to career development. That being said, the process of pursuing progress comes at a cost.

On top of tuition fees, it involves a considerable amount of sacrifice of personal, family and social time. Opting for full-time studies will also mean opportunity costs in income.

According to Kelly Global Workforce Index 2014 (KGIW), based on the 230,000 working adults surveyed, there is a clear distinction between acquiring new skills and advancing to higher levels.

Although it is a natural progression to climb the ladder, learning new skills does not necessarily promise role advancement. According to the workforce index, 57% of respondents say they are willing to sacrifice higher pay.

That might explain why 61% of Malaysian respondents are looking to switch jobs within the next year!

Perhaps it is the pace of economic change that has prompted more working adults to add a variety of skills to enhance their value and, ultimately, employability.

A report by the US department of labour stated that 65% of future jobs have not been invented yet – a staggering finding reflecting the hard reality. Simply put, you either upskill, or be left behind.

ON-CAMPUS OR ONLINE?
Fortunately, we are right in the middle of an education boom. Before the turn of the millennium, if you were looking for advancement, there were limited options around, with most of them offering traditional disciplines.

Now, the number of unique disciplines is significantly higher, with a growing trend of future-looking courses in response to near future demands.

Not just that, there are multitudes of mediums and channels for learning, most notably online courses. Massive Online Open Courses or MOOCs (pronounced mooks) have gained popularity worldwide. Quality content from the best schools around the world, without the overwhelming financial outlay, is right at our fingertips.

Granted, there are debates happening globally, regarding the effectiveness of e-learning, due to the absence of the traditional classroom setting, it certainly has not replaced on-campus education, because otherwise enrolment numbers for graduate schools would have been on a decline.

Whether it is online or in physical classrooms, higher learning requires a great amount of self-discipline and commitment.

As with any adult learning settings, it...
TIPS FOR JUGGLING CAREER, STUDIES AND LIFE

1. PRIORITISE, PRIORITISE, PRIORITISE
   It goes without saying that juggling career, life and studies is very demanding. In dealing with this, you just have to learn to make your priorities clear. That could involve limited leisure time, having (and following) a set routine, and other sacrifices. It is a delicate balance, after all. Your daily job should not be negatively affected because of your studies. It might, in fact, make you a better employee when it comes to getting things done.

2. MANAGE TIME
   We all have 24 hours in a day. Some achieve more, and some less. It all boils down to how one manages time. Studying while working is no different compared with studying full-time. In fact, full-time and part-time studies are nearly the same – by their set standards and the dedication required to complete the entire course. You still have submission deadlines and assignments to finish.

   On average, part-time students are expected to allocate 20 to 30 hours a week to study. This could mean averaging a study time of three to four hours a day, or spending more hours on weekends. That is where time management comes into play, balancing daily workload, studies and “me” time.

3. ALWAYS STAY ON TOP OF THINGS
   It is good to always be clear of what is expected of you – at work, at home and in life. Work schedules might be challenging at times, especially if it involves travelling. A thorough plan will be helpful to ensure that there is no conflict in your work-study-life scheduling.

   You might hit a busy period at work and be going through a particularly difficult subject assignment at the same time, and it is important to not let any of it affect your time.

4. HAVE A BREAK
   There might be days when you feel like giving up. Your energy level is low, you are not having enough sleep, and your concentration level is dipping.

   It’s time to take a break. Relaxation works, be it half an hour away from work or a short weekend trip. Understand that juggling work and study is tough. However, both are equally important, and you will need to keep up the momentum.

5. APPRECIATE TIME
   When you have to juggle these very important aspects in your life, your appreciation of time will be redefined. Remember those days which you used to feel were too long?

   Now you might be asking for more hours. Learn to be more efficient, and you will have “more” time.

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5.

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MyStarjob.com, Saturday 25 October 2014

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Contrary to traditional classroom learning, our experiential workshops focus on active learning experiences to maximise effectiveness for a corporate education setting. Instead of having classroom assignments, our personalised development plan and customised “live” business projects are integrated into our programmes to achieve in-house talent and career development objectives.

LEARNING NEVER STOPS
The choice to pursue post-degree education is certainly a personal one to make. It holds a lot of factors that will ultimately influence your career development prospects.

Having a clear career path and plan will definitely help, balanced by other personal commitments at hand.

Being with an employer with a high dedication towards your progress will also be advantageous.

Regardless of the objective (new skills, promotion, or pay rise), our capacity to continue learning is relatively unlimited.

It used to be that we learnt to pass or get good grades, but now there are no real exams at work (outside formal learning, of course).

Learning is what we, as human beings, are wired to adapt to besides the changes in our surroundings.

Be it professional certification, higher education, or workplace training, one thing is very certain – learning never stops.

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Imran Hashim is a talent acceleration programme manager with Leaderonomics. A big fan of learning new things, he draws inspiration from various everyday happenings and resources. To find out more about our customised Talent Acceleration Programme, email people@leaderonomics.com. For more articles, visit www.leaderonomics.com.

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comes with great challenges in balancing work, study and life.

Of course, given the time commitment required to complete formal higher education courses, not everyone will be up to the demanding challenge.

ON-THE-JOB TRAINING/ CORPORATE EDUCATION
Alternatively, corporate training can be another option for working adults who aspire for career advancement.

While job progression is very much an individual effort, more employers are paying attention to employee development.

Interestingly, according to the KGWI survey, Malaysian employees have among the highest percentage of career development discussions with employers (at 57%, above the global average of 38%).

This is common around Asia-Pacific, where 49% of respondents say that their career development resources are provided by employers.

At Leaderonomics, we have had great opportunities to work with such organisations committed to talent development.

Our corporate services solutions (assessments, learning and development, and talent acceleration programme, among others) have been engaged by companies from various industries.
HAVe you ever felt more like an invisible bystander than part of a team? Then you've experienced the powerlessness of being the "other." This means feelings that you are not truly embraced as part of the team, feeling excluded from opportunities and subsequently separating yourself further. In an organisational setting, this usually means being set apart from the power structures at the top.

THE 'OTHER' WOMEN

Women often find themselves as the "others" in male-dominated workforces and this can affect everything from morale to career advancement. There are consequences for being the "other" in Europe. According to the European Commission report entitled Tackling the gender pay gap in the European Union, European women earn 16.4% less per hour compared with men, 31.5% in the United Kingdom alone. Although this may not be the case for every woman in every working environment, in our male-dominated business world, it is an all too common experience. When women are excluded, organisations lose out on their talent.

Catalyst's latest study, Anatomy of Change: How Inclusive Cultures Evolve tracks Rockwell Automation's progress as the traditionally male-oriented organisation strives to become more inclusive for women and minorities. "There's always been an 'old boys' club mentality at Rockwell Automation. Teams often gathered after work at sports bars or places where women wouldn't necessarily feel comfortable. In meetings, women's ideas weren't always acknowledged. "Sales leaders, usually males, would present projects to senior management, instead of letting their team members do it. We weren't intention- ally leaving others out – it's just that we never thought of doing it any other way," says Jeff McGee, the channel sales manager. "Now I suggest lunch meetings instead of drinks after work. I make sure that everyone's ideas are heard in meetings. I recently supported our mostly female operations team as they presented their great work to sales management."

Change can only be created if organisations begin to listen, understand, and invest solutions that address the barriers that women and minority groups face. This goes a long way to building a strong pipeline of diverse talent.

"Being inclusive helps us to recruit and retain top talent. We can’t completely change the work culture overnight, but we're on the right track. "The real proof of change will happen when we can look at our organisational chart and see diversity in the leadership. I want to be part of that culture!" McGee says.

WOMEN'S ADVOCATE

In 2012, Thomson Reuters launched a coordinated approach to create a global strategy on diversity and inclusion led by Patsy Scuitto-Doerr, the global head of diversity and inclusion. Scuitto-Doerr was to work with the chief people officer and senior vice-president for talent and development to create a "Women Advisory Task Force.

The first action taken by Scuitto-Doerr was to work with the chief people officer and senior vice-president for talent and development to create a "Women Advisory Task Force.

It is made up of a group of male and female senior business leaders from the organisation. Mission: To ensure female leadership development and advancement to senior positions in the organisation.

"When the C-suite is focused on these issues it brings increased visibility and shows that the organisation is taking diversity and inclusion seriously," says Scuitto-Doerr.

The task force launched targeted career sponsorship opportunities which identified and developed high-potential women leaders by enhancing leadership skills and sharing strategies for business success. Task force members and other senior business leaders mentor, coach and network with participants to further add "a personal basis" to their work.

The task force recommended the introduction of global flexible working policies, impacting Thomson Reuters’ employees in more than 100 countries.

"We recognise that all of our employees can potentially experience events – such as relocation, having children, or needing to care for family members – which impact their working life. We're committed to supporting our employees as they make these decisions." The results: maternity leave has increased by 5%, paternity leave has increased by 10%, and flexible working arrangements, e.g. working from home, or splitting time between offices, made easier.

Such moves are also about changing the culture and attitudes, from senior leaders downwards, which have traditionally held women back. It is not enough to simply increase paid leave; you have to transform the attitude around maternity leave.

"We are now training our managers to support their employees through the entire process. We want to ensure a smooth handover when they leave, help them stay connected with the organisation while they are out, and help them reintegrate back when they are ready to return."

"The more diverse talent you have, the more you drive innovation, and the more you drive revenue and profitability. You have to cast the broadest net to reach the best talent."

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION LENS

The diversity and inclusion strategy carries a tremendous impact on employee engagement, resulting in a more engaged, better-trained workforce.

"We see our diversity and inclusion agenda as a real lever for driving business. Customers have the same priorities we do, and are facing the same challenges. Sharing best practices enables organisations to gain added touch points within the customer’s organisation, cultivating broader and deeper relationships and leading to more business," says Scuitto-Doerr.

Thomson Reuters has since become a thought-leader in this space, conducting and sponsoring research into gender dynamics. The focus now is to integrate this progress into its day-to-day operations, and ensuring that employees, from senior leadership down, automatically approach their roles with a "diversity and inclusion lens."

"We want our diversity and inclusion efforts woven into everything we do as an organisation," she states.

In conclusion, diversity and inclusion of women in organisations can be achieved when all stakeholders are on the same page to make it happen.

Raina Radzai is a learning and development practitioner with a leading Malaysia-based multinational corporation. For more articles, visit www.leaderonomics.com
JUGGLING RULES
CONTROLLING PATTERNS IN TIME AND SPACE

By SARAH TAN
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I t’s definitely possible to juggle different roles at the same time. Familiar to us are those who juggle their roles as parents on top of being working people (my parents are honestly the best jugglers I know), colleagues who juggle multiple roles in the organisation, and as explored in this pullout, students who juggle school and work. Recently, I came to find out how far one can stretch themselves in terms of the latter.

Having had the opportunity to sit at the same table as Leslie Dong during a gala dinner, I had the privilege to make her acquaintance. Aptly described by someone who introduced her during the event, Dong is beauty with brains. Not only is she the founder of a non-profit organisation called Global Student Initiative (GSI), she is also in her final year in the University of Colorado-Boulder, finishing her double degree in International Affairs and Asian Studies.

After meeting her, I immediately knew I had to interview her, and we had lovely conversation over Skype one morning (for her, it was night). Sharing honestly, she said that she initially didn’t have the courage to start her own non-profit organisation and take part in planning some big events. Having fear hold her back, she came up with many excuses. However, a push from a loved one made her come to her senses. As she started GSI, Dong began to realise that the workload wasn’t as bad as she feared. “You learn as you go. Find others who can help you, and delegate tasks wisely. You can’t do everything,” she shared.

The most important factor, according to Dong, is to maintain a good attitude. “Keep positive and be flexible. There are many things that can go wrong, but the end doesn’t matter – it’s the process. Give your best,” she said.

LOOKING FORWARD
On her future plans, Dong has a world of opportunities ahead of her. Despite that, she plans to focus on GSI for now, seeing it as a full-time career. “There’s still so much room for growth and potential,” she said. She hopes to expand the pool of students she can reach and impact, and is already planning out ways to do so. “It’s overwhelming, but exciting,” she enthuses, “there’s a challenge every day, and I’m always pushed out of my comfort zone.”

In spite of the challenges, Dong is motivated by the students she will have an impact on, and thus feels a pressure to play her part well. She also thinks that making it a habit to push oneself out of one’s comfort zone can help that person learn many things – something I wholeheartedly agree with.

BALANCE CHECK
In the midst of all her work, Dong also admits that it is a bit of a struggle to find a proper work-life balance. “I’m very passionate so I always give my all, but I know I’m still human and I still need to unwind,” she said.

However, it’s still important to have a life outside of work. On tough days, she depends on her emotional support system and talks to someone to vent out her difficulties. She also loves hiking as another method of unwinding. “There are days where I’m scrutinised, and there are days where I receive a lot of support. It’s kind of an emotional rollercoaster,” she mentioned.

FINAL THOUGHTS
Personally I had such an enjoyable time speaking to Dong, and hope that I can, like her, achieve those dreams that scare me a little bit, and hold on to that passion to keep me running. You can check out her non-profit organisation at http://www.globalstudentinitiative.com/.

Sarah is still in the midst of searching for her passion(s), and hopes that she’s making good progress on that journey. You can tell her your dream (and she might tell you hers), at editor@leaderonomics.com. Check out more articles at www.leaderonomics.com.

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● Dec 3–Dec 6, 2014

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● Dec 8–Dec 13, 2014

Register now at http://leaderonomics.org/youth or e-mail us at diode@leaderonomics.com to secure a place in camp!
WHILE many Malaysian organisations acknowledge the power of engagement, many struggle to make progress in this area. Motivating and developing people for high performance and differentiating between employees are becoming increasingly important for employers and employees alike.

To achieve this, many Malaysian organisations are deploying scientifically validated selection and assessment tools to ensure a better job fit of employees. By providing training and development programmes, on-the-job learning, coaching, and feedback, employers can ensure that everyone who works with them has the resources they need to learn more and build their careers.

However, companies often lose sight of the real objective and the importance of employees’ learning and development.

From many focus groups held with all levels of Malaysian employees, Aon Hewitt finds that employees see training as an enabler to achieve their professional development and as a key development opportunity. As Aon Hewitt’s 2013 Trends in Asia Pacific Employee Engagement Report shows, career opportunities in Malaysia (and across the region) is a key driver of engagement. It has also been the most significant driver to improve employee engagement for Malaysia for the last 10 years.

Quite strikingly, career opportunities rate much higher than pay in their impact on engagement because employees recognise the correlation between training and development, work-life balance, career opportunities, and employee engagement.

WHAT THE BEST DO TO DEVELOP AND KEEP THEIR TALENT?

Aon Hewitt’s 12 years of Best Employers research in Asia-Pacific, incorporating insights from over 3,800 organisations, identifies company best practices that address these matters. To attract and retain the best talent, best employers in Malaysia recognise the need to invest in employees’ development and take training and development seriously.

They are not looking at training as an individual training programme, but rather as behaviour or functional competence-linked development. Training programmes are followed through with post-programme follow-up and the involvement of managers. Best employers have continuously invested over the years to strengthen this important area of business performance by placing emphasis on employee development plans, internal talent management, leadership development for managers, and employee performance management.

So, what are they doing so differently from other employers?

- Best employers acknowledge that training and development begins with the onboarding process. It offers a great opportunity for employees to get acquainted with the organisation – its values, structure, culture and policies.
- They invest in training and development to inspire long-term commitment. Employees who receive training get the satisfaction of mastering new skills and increasing their chances for career advancement.
- Training demonstrates the organisation’s commitment to employees, makes them feel valued, and fosters reciprocal commitment.
- Best employers usually treat their experienced employees as their most valuable assets to boost feelings of self-efficacy. They have also learnt to recognise and rely on employee experience.
- Experienced employees possess applicable skills that allow them to function autonomously, manage projects, and train other workers.
- Best employers also have a different approach to managing performance. They realise that regular performance reviews can help optimise job-person fit. Reviews can help to identify an employee’s strengths and weaknesses. They offer a better chance to get to know what specific demographic segments enjoy about their jobs and learn about their long-term aspirations, which in turn helps to design individual and appropriate training and development programmes.

All these measures ensure that employees are enjoying their jobs, getting better at them, and able to progress in their careers. An employer is able to plan ahead and develop their workers internally, instead of hiring primarily from external sources. In this way, they can ensure that opportunities are available for current employees.

In return, eight out of 10 employees in Malaysian organisations with best employers are engaged, and get a sense of accomplishment from their work. Best employers are also clearly stronger when it comes to managing careers, scoring 24% higher than the market average for the statement “This organisation offers excellent career opportunities to employees who are strong performers.”

Best employers achieved double the growth in profit levels compared to other organisations.

Best employers achieved 20 percentage points higher employee engagement levels than others.

Best employers had lower employee turnover levels and a significantly higher percentage of all employees, particularly managers, being internally promoted.

These statistics are striking evidence that a committed and productive workforce delivers stronger business results.

If you want to learn more about how to improve your organisation’s level of engagement and enhance people performance, or want to start your journey to becoming a best employer, the Aon Hewitt best employers Malaysia 2015 programme, in partnership with TalentCorp Malaysia and mystarjob.com provides a platform to do so.

Together, they aim to help you to identify engagement levels, leadership effectiveness, employer brand and culture, to drive high performance. Best practices in talent management are shared with participating organisations and results are benchmarked against other aspirational or recognised best employers in Malaysia and Asia.

The registration for the 2015 programme closed on Oct 10, while the data collection launch will close on Oct 31. For more information about this programme, email editor@leaderonomics.com.

Dr Jens Ballendowitsch is the practice leader of Aon Hewitt’s Talent & Engagement Practice in Malaysia. For more employee engagement articles, visit www.leaderonomics.com