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People who know me know I get (more than a tiny bit) cheered by sweeping generalisations. In my current role, I read about Gen-Xs and Zs on pretty much a daily basis and like reading the hypothesis of these generalisations, as I can understand better why, for example, someone who has grown up in an environment of economic uncertainty and high rates of unemployment, as opposed to his or her parents where lifetime employment was the norm, might have different inclinations and views of the future.

Employee engagement is a priority for many, and taking a step back to understand what might lead to employee disengagement brings us to at least one logical conclusion: a mismatch in expectations from both employee and employer. And related to this, missed opportunities for both when organisations fail to accurately and effectively convey their brand promise to potential employees.

Kishan Thiran talks about writing a failure resume – why it is important for individuals to take the time to document past failures, as spectacular as they may be, and to pen down what was learned.

In light of this, and the high cost of employee turnover, organisations too might want to rethink the role of human resources (HR) in the public relations (PR) space. Millie Ong expertly addresses the notion of employer branding and its power beyond recruiting efforts, as spectacular as they may be, and to pen down what was learned.

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**WHEN PEOPLE GO PUBLIC**

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**RIDING IN TANDEM**

Externally, HR writes advertisements and job scopes for onboarding, maintain corporate blogs, and work with universities and other corporate partners to fill up gaps and initiate talent acceleration programmes.

At its core, HR is very much associated with communication and collaboration. In today’s interconnected world, it is highly likely that PR and CC departments are responsible in monitoring an organisation's social media platform and managing media queries and press releases.

Fundamentally, we see that their functions often overlap with one another. In a way, they are company brand champions, determined to maintain a positive corporate image which serve the organisation and the public.

**WHAT SAY YOU?**

- How should your HR collaborate with your PR/CC to best align employees with an organisation’s communication efforts?

- How should your PR/CC collaborate with your HR to best motivate employees or to choose the right candidates for the job in an organisation?

Do share with us your views by writing to editor@leaderonomics.com

Well, it is only wise for HR and PR/CC to ride in tandem, and be positioned strategically to work together and not as standalone silos.
WHAT DOES YOUR FAILURE RESUME LOOK LIKE?

By ROSHAN THIRAN
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S Fernando professor Tina Seelig requires all her students to write a failure resume: “a resume that summarises all their biggest screw-ups – personal, professional, and academic.” She insists that for every failure on the resume, the student must also describe what he or she has learnt from that experience. Reading her requirement for her students, I saw the power in such an exercise and started scribbling together my personal failure resume.

As I jotted down all of my professional failures, I looked back to see if I managed to glean any useful lessons which I later applied in life. Much to my surprise, I realised that one of my biggest failures (messing up at a business integration exercise early in my career in the United States), led to an amazing triumph in a bigger integration role in Europe – a huge part of the success was drawn from lessons learnt from my first failure.

Apart from that, I have also failed miserably in a business entrepreneurship while at university. The key part of that failure was due to me being poor at inventory management.

In my first operational role running a business unit, I applied much of the lessons learnt from my inventory management mistakes and was extremely successful in turning a business around. Humiliation, disappointment,做成的失败, and hurt are all natural results of a failure.

Failure feels bad, and it has never sat well with me. Yet, we all know that it is a necessary part of growth. Many people today talk about failure and its importance, but most people still struggle to realise that you really learn only when you mine lessons from your experiences in failure.

It is not about failing, but about learning. An anonymous saying goes, “failure is only the opportunity to begin again – this time more wisely.”

LESSONS FROM FAILURE

Seelig makes this “resume” assignment mandatory, as “failures increase the chance that you won’t make the same mistake again. Failures are also a sign that you have taken on challenges that expand your skills.” In fact, many successful people believe that if you aren’t failing sometimes, then you aren’t taking enough risks. So, if you want more successes, you are going to have to tolerate more failures along the way.

James Joyce once wrote that “mistakes are the portals of discovery.” Such is the paradox of leadership, we can only succeed by experiencing failure.

Regardless of our role in the organisation, from CEO to mailroom clerk, we all make mistakes. The key question is: Do we take time to firstly identify our mistakes and then learn from those incidents?

WRITING A FAILURE RESUME

Most resumes focus solely on successes; they overlook failures that probably had major impact on who we have become and a possible factor for our future victories.

In fact, many interviewers today ask questions like, “tell us about your weaknesses” or “provide us with a few examples of where things didn’t go the way you planned, and what you learnt from them.”

Having a failure resume helps you answer many of these questions and shows that you have the humility to learn from your failure.

The failure resume essentially lists each of your mistakes or failures.

A failure resume keeps your humility in check. Looking back at my failures has helped me empathise with others. I used to stress out significantly every time I failed. Today, as I look back at my numerous shortcomings and mistakes, I don’t worry too much.

I just figure out how to learn from it. This has helped me mature significantly.

So how do you do it? Writing a failure resume is a four-step process:

Column 1: Write down the major failures in your life

Column 2: Mention why you have failed

Column 3: State how you have failed

Column 4: Outline the lessons learnt

LEARNING FROM FAILURE

Other than writing a failure resume, reflecting on our failures should also be done periodically.

Every month, quarter or year spend a few hours looking back at your professional, social and personal life to see where mistakes were made.

Here are some steps we can take to benefit from these failures:

1. TAKE OWNERSHIP OF YOUR FAILURE

Failures in our lives are never totally our own fault. They are a combination of various factors. It is easy to blame others for our failures. I have done that many times in good conscience as it was clear the failure was caused by various external factors. Yet, in spite of this, you need to look closely at every failure and see how YOU contributed to it (i.e. what should you have done differently?).

Great leaders never blame others for their failures. They take total ownership of their failure.

2. APOLOGISE QUICKLY AND FIX YOUR MISTAKE

Admitting your mistake is helpful. However, you need to address the issue and remedy the error (as best possible).

By admitting mistakes, we not only unburden ourselves emotionally, but also showcase our humanity and vulnerability to others. This is an important leadership journey.

In 2001, the University of Michigan Health System launched a programme encouraging health workers to report medical mistakes, which mandated telling patients and their families about errors made, how it occurred and what steps were taken to prevent a similar mistake in the future.

This included a sincere apology to the patient and/or their family and offering fair compensation for harm when at fault. The result – a reduction in the number of lawsuits and other compensation claims, a faster resolution of disputes, and lower legal costs.

3. UNDERSTAND THE ROOT CAUSE

Take some time to reflect on your mistakes and understand the real issues behind it. Ask these questions:

What went wrong? Was it a process issue, people issue or something else?

Where did the error occur?

How did the mistake happen?

What was the root cause?

What contributed to the situation? Did you contribute to the situation? How?

Once you have asked questions and understood the root cause of the situation, you can move to learning from the situation.

4. LEARN FROM PAST MISTAKES

Everyone makes mistakes, but great leaders learn and become better.

You need to ask yourself how you would do things differently in a similar situation the next time it occurs.

Many of us make mistakes but shrug our shoulders and comfort ourselves by saying that we have “moved on.”

While that is true it is important not to dwell too long on the mistakes we have and instead take stock of these mistakes and work out an action plan on how we could have done it differently.

5. TALK AND TEACH OTHERS WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

From our research at Leaderonomics, we find that the best way to solidify learning is to first practise, then teach it.

Teaching others what we have learnt truly enhances learning. Sharing your lessons learnt with others is also a great way to be at peace with yourself in terms of your failures and it will showcase your humility as a person who not only fails but gains great insights and lessons from your mistakes.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Harvard Business School’s Carmen Nober states that “experienced entrepreneurs know that running a company that eventually fails can actually help a career, but only if the executives are willing to view failure as a potential for improvement.”

We all know that while failure makes you a better leader, it really is about learning and growing from it.

Mistakes are life’s way of teaching us great lessons. After all, failure maketh man!
EMPLOYER BRAND
A ROLE FOR INTEGRATED MARKETING

By KAREN NEOH
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I have always had great admiration for directors who amazingly pull together people onstage, back- stage, lighting, sound, musicians, and juggle the myriad of logistics necessary – motivating and inspir- ing diverse sets of people so that on opening night, the audience sees just one wonderful produc- tion. This week, I had the opportu- nity to chat with the director of Crazy Little Thing Called Love – an award-winning production of the Footstool Players.

The man is Colin Kirton. Kirton’s Crazy Little Thing Called Love was inspired by the awareness that many marriages and families struggle with issues and we wanted to address some of these through theatre," said Kirton.

Footstool Players is a touring theatre group that has its origins in the church. Kirton started it in 2001 together with four others. The Footstool Players occasionally takes productions out into mainstream theatre spaces – as in the case of Crazy Little Thing Called Love.

"We first staged it at a KLPac in 2008 to an overwhelming response, rave reviews and the award for Best Group Performance (Theatre) at the BOH Cameronian Arts Awards that year.
"But what was most precious to us were the stories people shared with us of how the play encouraged them in some way in their own relationships. Many have asked us to restage the show, so here we are finally doing it after six years!"

Kirton directs and trains for the stage, and who appears on stage and screen, Kirton, a freelance performing artist who appears on stage and screen, directs and trains for the stage, and who also does voice-over work. It seems glamorous, forget it. It requires a lot of discipline and hard work. There will be discouraging times, but persevere.

Kirton decided that he would someday expand on the theme and develop a full-length production. "It took me four years to put it together, and when Crazy Little Thing Called Love was born, I asked Focus on the Family if they would like to partner with us, which they readily agreed to," recounts Kirton.

Before parting ways, I asked Kirton what advice he would give to anyone interested in a career in the performing arts, to which he enthused, "if this is how you are wired and you are passionate about it, go for it! Forget what others say about getting a ‘real job,’ and don’t let the critics rattle you. But if you’re thinking of doing it because it seems glamorous, forget it. It requires a lot of discipline and hard work. There will be discouraging times, but persevere.

**Our objective is that this play will expose some of the things that plague our relationships, but beyond that encourage us to persevere at working at being a better spouse, parent or child. Of course, those same principles extend into our friendships and working relationships too.**
HR: THE NEWEST BRAND ON THE BLOCK
MORE THAN JUST A PR EXERCISE

BY MILLIE ONG
millie.ong@leaderonomics.com

In an era where branding can make or break an organisation, active efforts should be made to create a positive image for the organisation by all stakeholders. Although commonly the domain of corporate branding and public relations (PR) teams, human resources (HR) is stepping up to be a big contributor to branding efforts in many organisations.

As talents are at the forefront of an organisation and the catalyst for its capabilities, HR policies can be as important as the products and services that an organisation offers. HR departments can actively promote their policies and initiatives as part of corporate branding, highlighting efforts directed at employees rather than to the general public.

Ask the question “Which is your dream company to work for?” and people will go on and on about their favourite companies. These companies, often leaders in their industries, are famous because of their positive HR policies, work culture and employee engagement efforts – sometimes without the same amount of brand awareness for their products and services.

These organisations use HR as a form of brand expression, generating positive values associated to the company. HR branding efforts have become part and parcel of HR strategy due to its benefits – particularly in talent acquisition. Positive publicity as an ‘employer of choice’ often allows organisations to attract larger quantities of talents, including the cream of the crop.

A good track record of engaged employees and other pro-employee initiatives shapes an organisation that is in demand amongst talents seeking new opportunities. People want to work for a company that would treat them well.

IS IT ALL FOR SHOW?

But the question that arises is this: are these HR policies just another PR branding tactic for a company, and nothing else? Perhaps, but often there is more to it than just that. Implementing pro-employee HR policies can be extremely beneficial to all parties involved. Organisations who intend to utilise HR policies to drive branding must have genuine and properly implemented initiatives to qualify for such publicity.

Undelivered promises can create negative reputations about an organisation, therefore diluting the credibility of the brand. As such, organisations must then truly be committed and willing to invest effort and resources towards improving HR processes, employee engagement and taking initiatives to nurture their own talent.

Employees within a company then benefit directly from these efforts, even if they appear to be aimed at a purpose that extends beyond impact to employees. In addition, strong employer brand efforts often involve more than just a talent acquisition strategy. It is also an effort to keep employees engaged.

PRO-EMPLOYEE POLICIES?

Positive HR policies can be aimed at keeping current employees happy and ensuring talent retention, especially in a time when job-hopping is increasingly the norm. Thus, the initiatives become directly aimed at benefiting existing employees as well, such as through increased compensation and benefits or improved work culture.

Such branding strategies create positive conversation about the organisation and act as indirect marketing for the company’s products and services. This form of passive marketing could then actually generate sales and revenue for the organisation.

Furthermore, by attracting larger talent pools interested in working with the company, organisations have the opportunity to recruit the best of talents. Strong talent can have extremely positive impacts on organisation performance, whether through the infusion of new ideas, improved work processes or productive collaboration. Having the right talent within a company can be the competitive advantage possessed by industry leaders.

Moreover, according to Organisational Support Theory, talents who perceive their employers as being supportive and valuing their contributions are more likely to reciprocate – possibly through increased effort in the workplace.

When benefits reaped from positive branding and effective talent acquisition become apparent, it motivates organisations to further upkeep their efforts – creating an eventual multiplier effect.

Millie Ong hopes that every company will be inspired to become an employer of choice, taking the steps to create a happier and more engaged work culture for all employees. She can be reached at millie.ong@leaderonomics.com. You can read more of her articles at www.leaderonomics.com

GIVEN the new role that human resources (HR) plays in contributing towards an organisation’s brand, employees themselves inevitably become brand ambassadors. They are the walking, talking models who can share and publicise positive policies, processes and initiatives that have been implemented within the organisation.

This goes beyond a picture of smiling employees featured in a press release to actual testimonials of how HR actions affect their work on a daily basis. Outside of external brand communication, having employees advocate for the organisation through informal means can become a strong branding tool.

If you work in a company with positive HR policies that have been beneficial to your work and life, one would be bound to want to share this information with others. But, how?

TALK ABOUT IT... EVERYWHERE

Whether in casual conversations with friends or families, there’s no harm in sharing the practices of your organisation as part of your daily interactions. Just make sure it flows as part of conversation and doesn’t sound like you’re blowing your own horn.

The power of social media is undeniable, and it serves as a great platform to share as well. Whether it’s a simple status talking about the recent employee engagement effort or sharing press releases by the company, it increases the level of reach that your organisation gets.

Through increased awareness of these positive HR policies conducted by the organisation, it serves as passive contribution to the organisation’s branding.

CONTRIBUTE IDEAS AND SUGGESTIONS

HR policies are about the employees, and how they relate to the work of the organisation. As employees, these policies are central to your daily work and can have direct effects on you.

Although the creation and development of these policies fall under the purview of HR practitioners, every employee has the right to contribute suggestions and feedback about it. It is likely that employees themselves would have a better understanding of how policies affect them within their context, and be able to propose ways to improve.

Constant improvement creates more positive HR policies, which then further strengthen your organisation’s HR branding.
THE HR-PR SYNERGY
TOWARDS STRATEGIC EMPLOYEE RELATIONS PRACTICES

HR AND PR: THEY ARE NOT SO DIFFERENT

Grief is a traditional viewpoint of human resources (HR). The first thing that comes to mind would be that it is an operational role that crafts job positions, hires and dismisses, rewards, recognises and pays strategy. However, the rapidly changing times, organisations today cannot afford a silo department that merely functions in isolation. This is why forward-thinking to continually enhance the value of the company is today’s organisations. HR managers need to think of themselves as strategy partners and participate in the organisation’s strategic planning process to contribute to the business vision.

A forward-thinking HR aligns itself with the needs of its changing organisation in order to turn it into a successful organisation that is adaptive, resilient, agile and customer-centric.

NO organisation is immune from the silo syndrome, where different departments, divisions and individuals within the organisation function and interact as a segregated entity.

THE SILO CULTURE

The silo culture often occurs when an organisation’s historical structure is kept and the organisation is structurally set up to work independently. This is reflected by the leadership inhibits collaboration and networking.

This is a burning issue that the frontline management tries to address, where the lack of communication and interaction not only breeds usual thinking and produces inefficiencies, but also hinders the organisation from being aligned and moving forward in a strategic direction.

Reorganising the company’s structure and reporting responsibilities could be one way of addressing this problem. However, it can certainly go back into another silo of its own if the whole system is not the only way that organisational silos are formed.

THE COLLABORATIVE CULTURE

Adopting a collaborative culture focuses on creating greater value for the overall organisation – presenting different ways of working to the natural patterns emerging as individuals from different departments and functions with different ways of thinking and working share ideas and information and brainstorm ideas as they exchange information and knowledge horizontally.

THE HR CULTURE

One of the most effective ways is to bring together cross-functional and interdepartmental employees to work in a defined project team to address company-wide issues across different departments.

BEST PRACTICE SHARING

Cross-functional projects serve as a common platform for cross-functional employees to leverage their expertise and experiences while working together. This strengthens the cross-functional working relationship and helps address organisational conflict and business silos.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL UNDERSTANDING AND EXPERIENCE

It also improves communications between business units, and strengthens the organisational culture. Enhanced cross-functional understanding which then helps address organisational conflict and business silos.

REAL LIFE APPLIICATION

A huge emphasis of Leaderonomics’ talent development ties are in providing employees with cross-functional working opportunities, which in turn helps them to accept assignments from different departments.

During a crisis, they are the key individuals who decide the planned course of action and the consequences that will impact the organisation – they now need to be branding, PR and HR departments.

They are also involved in crafting campaigns and designing recruitment strategies. They are equally responsible for educating, engaging and influencing the public on the company image in positive manners.

A strong working relationship between PR and HR departments is integral to any organisation, from matters pertaining to day-to-day operations to crisis situations.

With HR’s expert knowledge on how people think about their work, they then direct communications campaigns to ensure the company is the best possible place to work.

Internally, they also leverage social media as one of their marketing strategies.

COLLABORATION

There is a huge potential for cross-functional collaboration across HR, communications and public relations (PR) departments. In fact, there is no point in having separate HR and PR departments.

HR can serve as a valuable member on the PR team. HR, PR, communications and marketing departments all play a role in building and maintaining organisational reputation.

Communications, and not just PR, can be involved in crafting campaigns and devising recruitment strategies. They also have the responsibility of educating and influencing the public on the company image in positive manners.

A strong working relationship between PR and HR departments is integral within any organisation, as matters pertaining to day-to-day operations to crisis situations.

With HR’s data-driven knowledge about people, they are the best people to point of contact in determining appropriate methods and channels of communication. Another strong reason would be organisational change. Management teams generally need input from different perspectives to navigate this unfamiliar territory.

A strong working relationship reflects on the fact that HR and PR need to see a solid foundation for change.

This will also help establish credibility, better manage those intricacies, especially weathering through the difficult times, as people would be a natural priority for HR and PR.

TOWARDS STRATEGIC EMPLOYEE RELATIONS PRACTICES

The HR role now spans many hats and is not limited to the traditional administrative processing and policymaking job descriptions – they now play the roles of branding, PR and marketing experts.

INTERNAL SPONSORESHIP

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Robert Levitt, a social entrepreneur, has a unique way of making investment decisions which can be described in three words — immersion, integration and absorption.

The founder and chief investment officer of Levitt Capital Management (LCC), a boutique cross-border wealth management company headquartered in Florida, Levitt spends much of his time immersing himself in foreign countries, integrating with the local masses, as well as absorbing their languages, lifestyles and cultures. By doing so, he is able to gain first-hand insights and develop ideas for investment opportunities.

The multi-lingual Levitt, who is tasked with LCC’s strategic vision, research and trading decisions, often appears as a guest on major financial television networks around the world. The nine-time recipient of the prestigious Worth List of Top 250 Wealth Advisers in the United States award is also frequently quoted on premier publications such as Barron’s, Wall Street Journal and Business Week.

LEVITT SHARES WITH THE LEADERONOMICS SHOW how he grew up as a minority in a Hispanic community in New Mexico, southern border of Mexico and the United States (US).

After seeing stop signs written in Spanish while on a family trip to Mexico, he realised his passion to be immersed in foreign countries. He then moved to France, where he realised that while Americans are used to having access to anything they want 24 hours a day, the rest of the world doesn’t work that way.

“I realise there are things that are more important than me and that the people are far more important than making money,” shares Levitt.

THE PEOPLE FIRST, MONEY LATER

Levitt shares with The Leaderonomics Show how he recognised the lack of public transportation and most people save up to buy motorcycles.

“They are neither doctors nor nurses, but rendered medical assistance. I vividly remember a line – we’ve done more for American-Pakistan relations than all the governments in the world. That really impacted me.”

“It is so satisfying to have one-on-one relationships with people and changing their lives after giving them the opportunities I had,” he says.

In recent years, Levitt focuses particularly on Malaysia and Indonesia in making investment decisions. In addition to traditional products, Levitt invested in a Malaysian school for Afghan refugee children, the Hilla Community Centre.

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

After achieving success and sufficient financial stability to self-support, Levitt left the US to pursue “his heart’s desire”.

“I was surrounded by successful people that were focused only on getting richer, having a bigger house or bigger car. If success is your driving point, which it is for so many people, then once you get there, what drives you next?” ponders Levitt.

“With less than 10% of the people around the world having food in the fridge and money in the wallet, what happens to the investment world doesn’t affect the majority of the people. These people are working hard to put food on the table and to buy a fridge to put food in.”

Levitt claims that personally, he desires to be involved with the underprivileged who have no opportunities because of their circumstances, faith, where they were born or what happened in the past, to help them do well in their lives.

Recalling a TV show in the US about paramedics based in Pakistan, Levitt says, “They are neither doctors nor nurses, but rendered medical assistance. I vividly remember a line – we’ve done more for American-Pakistan relations than all the governments in the world. That really impacted me.”

“It is so satisfying to have one-on-one relationships with people and changing their lives after giving them the opportunities I had,” he says.

In recent years, Levitt focuses particularly on Malaysia and Indonesia in making investment decisions. In addition to traditional products, Levitt invested in a Malaysian school for Afghan refugee children, the Hilla Community Centre.

RADICALLY DRIVEN

When asked for his advice to a young person who wishes to emulate him, he quips that getting into his space is very challenging, “I don’t think many people would want to. You have to be a little bit crazy!”

He relates how he spent a short stint in a small prison in Africa after being arrested while hitchhiking down the roads of central Africa, as the locals wrongly accused him of being a mercenary.

Despite being thrown into prison, Levitt found Africa fascinating. “The people I met in that part of the world were so friendly, including the prison guards.”

Levitt says, “You learn that you do not get the things you want or things done your way. This is their way of life.”

“Being born white with English as my native language and coming from one of the few places in the world where anyone from any walk of life can do well, I see the privilege, but a lack of appreciation for it,” he admits.

“Experiencing first-hand a place where whatever they can be taken away anytime made me appreciate the advantages I had.

“To me, this is not work but this is who I am. I can’t wait to get up in the morning to see what’s happening next. There is no such thing as a weekend,” he claims.

Quoting his favourite book, Shantaram, which was influenced by real events in the life of the author Gregory Roberts, he advises: “Life is an experience and not about the destination. There will be trials and tribulations, so embrace it.

“Don’t worry too much about what happens next. Every day, wake up and read the next page of your life. Don’t try to predict the next chapter or the ending of the book.”

To access the full interview and to access other videos of inspirational personalities, visit http://www.leaderonomics.tv/the-leaderonomics-show/video. For more inspiring articles, visit www.leaderonomics.com
entrepreneurs were born out of sur-

Let's discuss these points further:

What we mean by this is that

look at the flip side of the coin: how

beautiful moments, we should also

often a lifetime journey full of rich

think of personal growth as some

aged by self-appointed gurus to

editor@leaderonomics.com

By IAN CHEW
editor@leaderonomics.com

TALKING about limitations seems to be a forbidden topic in personal development. We are often encour-
eged by self-appointed gurus to think of personal growth as some-
thing infinite.

Then, when faced with various

limitations in your environment, you need to find the best ways to utilise whatever resources you have. This ultimately leads to a greater level of productivity and creativity.

When I was young, I remember being told by a teacher to draw "anything" on a piece of paper. I just looked at her blankly, not knowing what to do, until she told me to draw an animal out of exaspera-
tion.

Immediately my mind could focus and I picked the lion, my favourise beast in the wild (perhaps I watched too many reruns of Lion
King). Now as a writer and photog-
rapher, I am all too aware how many of my peers in either or both

industries seem to think that the

notion of "the sky is the limit" is the best rule.

While that notion is beautiful in theory, it does not quite work in reality. It is best that we set certain guidelines to push ourselves to be more productive and crea-
tive on a daily basis.

For example, I set a personal rule to write not more than 500 words on a blog post. I hated it at first, but, I then got used to the rule and began to see how powerful the limitation could be.

Instead of rambling on and on

and lose my audience in the

process, I benefitted much more by having a writing cap and being forced to be concise with my words.

The BEAUTY of LIMITATIONS

By MORAG BARRETT
editor@leaderonomics.com

W

HEN was the

last time anyone

asked you what

keeps you at your current compa-

ny? Come to think of it, when was the last time you asked yourself?

In my experience, many of the

leaders and managers I work

with are good at asking ques-
tions when recruiting you to

join their team or company. This is to understand

why you might want to

join the firm, and why the

company might want to

hire you. To determine if

you will be a good "fit".

However, once you are

through that

dead end at your desk, it's a differ-
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WOMEN ENGAGEMENT

TOWARDS GREATER CONNECTIONS

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

Engagement has been such a hot buzzword thrown about in organisational development, human resources (HR) and leadership thought circles that it has become widely acknowledged as a critical driver in drawing out discretionary effort from workers. But what is engagement, really? (And no, I'm not talking about a state of betrothal between two people with the view of matrimony)

Defining “Engagement”

A simple Google search brings up various definitions, signifying the connection, enthusiasm and absorption an employee has towards organisational goals, and the willingness to take positive, discretionary action to further overall business results.

Broadly speaking, employee engagement has very little to do with technical knowledge or skills, but a state of mind and feeling. The term “engagement” itself is closest to the word “commitment”, which in itself is an emotional construct.

Engagement can be defined not as employee happiness or satisfaction, but the emotional commitment to the organisation and its goals.

It’s a state where 88% of highly engaged employees see themselves contributing to understanding how their job contributes to the organisation towards achieving business goals (2012 Global Workplace Study, Engagement at Risk: Driving strong performance in a volatile global environment by Towers Watson).

The current workplace scene shows that the corporate world’s efforts at engagement programmes seem to be gaining gradual success.

Based on the most recent Gallup’s State of the Global Workplace surveys, 13% of employees felt engaged in 2011–2012, up from 11% in 2009–2010. “Not engaged” employees increased from 53% to 63%, but this was offset by a reduction in “actively disengaged” from 27% in 2009–2010 to 24% in 2011–2012.

Whilst business practices have adapted quickly to rising connectedness in a highly competitive global and local workplace, there is increasing pressure on leaders and managers to continue the search for effective engagement models.

As technology drives an ever-changing experience in the way we live and work, there is a growing demand for evolving knowledge, skills and management structure.

From flexi-hours to hot desking, crowd sourcing, virtual and global teams, and other non-traditional working arrangements, employers must evolve with these changes whilst keeping employees emotionally aligned with organisational goals, or risk being left behind.

Women in the Malaysian Workplace

As reported in the Gender Diversity Benchmark for Asia 2014 (GDBA 2014) benchmarking gender diversity in more than 30 multinational companies across six Asian markets (China, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore), Malaysian women have it better than our Singaporean sisters.

Our nation has more than achieved gender parity, with women representing an average of 58.1% of the total workforce: 63% at junior level, 50.3% at middle levels, and 34% at senior levels.

Yet surprisingly, our women’s labour force participation rate at 46% is significantly one of the lowest rates amongst ASEAN countries.

UNDP’s Asia Pacific Human Development Report 2010 opines that increasing that rate to 55% will drive gross domestic product up by 2% annually.

That alone should be a key motivating factor for Malaysia’s public and private sectors to look critically at how organisational infrastructure can integrate women engagement into what has been a traditionally male-dominated environment.

This then begs some key questions:

● How would engagement help with attracting and retaining more women in the workplace?

● What is engagement currently looking like for Malaysian women?

● Do women require different factors for engagement, compared to their male counterparts?

Women and Engagement

The fact remains that we spend more time at work than anywhere else.

Work enables us to have some physical and psychological needs met – physical survival, the security of employment, satisfaction in our ability to achieve and contribute towards a goal, and relationships with others.

The Gallup Engagement Hierarchy measures 12 important elements of employee engagement that are directly tied to performance results.

These 12 elements are grouped into four sections:

● Basic needs.

● Management support.

● Teamwork.

● Growth.

Gallup’s research has shown that the foundational items must be in place in order for any organisation to progress towards a higher level of employee engagement.

Psychologists and neuroscientists demonstrate that, contrary to popular wisdom, women are not necessarily more “emotional” than men. We are just wired — cognitively and physiologically — to respond differently to emotional stimuli.

For example, male and female brains are differently predisposed towards empathy, emotional intelligence and systems thinking.

Traditional gender stereotyping and societal pressures reinforce our perception that women are more expressive and men more impas-sive.

It is precisely these social conditions that generally predispose women towards both seeking out (as employees) and implementing (as managers) the middle levels of the Engagement Hierarchy — Gallup’s global poll shows that women are more likely than men to be engaged in their jobs.

The hierarchy’s mid rungs include showing care and recognition, helping team members to find meaning and excel in their work, feeling as though you belong, and having a best friend in the workplace.

In addition to that, with the advent of Gen-Y and the gradual shift towards a more open and flexible work culture, it’s no surprise that gender studies find women excelling in the “relational” and “nurturing” competencies required for management and leadership.

Women Workforce in Malaysia

Yet it’s women’s emphasis on relationships that forms a very real societal reason why Malaysia’s labour participation rate is so low — in TalentCorp’s 2013 survey, having to raise a family is one of the main reasons why women chose to quit their jobs.

Clearly, most women don’t quit out of a desire to stop working, but because our economic and organisational infrastructure does not currently provide the necessary support for women struggling to cope with the pressure of excelling in both their professional and personal lives.

Of 122 publicly-traded Malaysian companies surveyed, only 6% had childcare centres, with less than a fifth with mothers’ rooms.

At the top of the professional stratosphere, only 7% of board seats on Bursa Malaysia-listed companies are held by women.

In Malaysia, our need is to continue seeking out the tools and practices that help us foster greater engagement in our public and private sectors.

Concluding Thoughts

Am I advocating that the conversation on workplace engagement should examine differences in the way both genders are engaged?

Yes, but not at the expense of either gender, or doing so just for gender parity’s sake.

Companies rolling out mother care facilities, fitness clubs and other structural initiatives would do well to involve both men and women in a dialog to intentionally discover the engagement factors that would suit both, in a way relevant to that organisation.

Critically, the drive towards engagement best practices requires organisations to reflect deeply into creating better opportunities for employee growth.

After all, the principles needed to develop great employees, managers and leaders should cut across the boundaries of gender and generational differences.

Yi-Wen is part of the Learning & Acceleration team in Leaderonomics’ Corporate Services unit. For more information on engagement and corporate culture, connect with her at yiwen.huil@leaderonomics.com. For more insights on women and careers, visit www.leaderonomics.com.
For the past six years, DIODE, the brand under the community umbrella of Leaderonomics, has been organising leadership camps to inspire young leaders all over Malaysia. The brand is committed to providing an experiential learning experience to its participants through various projects, game-based learning, engagement sessions and leadership sharing by leaders from different fields. Leaderonomics Youth, in partnership with Microsoft Malaysia, will be running a series of DIODE Camps this coming December school holidays.

The camps are specially designed to help youth, aged 12 to 19, discover their true leadership potential through various experiential learning sessions.

The three camps are the Tweens Leadership Camp, Youth Leadership Camp, and School Leavers Camp. Each camp is designed specifically to cater to the needs of youth at different stages of their lives.

**TWEENS LEADERSHIP CAMP**

The Tweens Leadership Camp is a fun-filled four-day camp for young people from 12 to 13 years old. This specially tailored camp is designed to help participants in understanding their true potential as a leader. Campers will be given the opportunity to lead other youths through group projects. They will be mentored by certified facilitators throughout the camp.

**YOUTH LEADERSHIP CAMP**

To ensure continuous learning for campers, the dedicated Leaderonomics Youth team has also designed a special programme for those aged 14 to 16. This exciting six-day programme, branded as the Youth Leadership Camp, is one-of-a-kind.

The camp covers topics like confidence and self-awareness, as well as communication and public speaking skills.

Similar to what the Tweens Camp offers, the Youth Leadership Camp’s unique selling point would be its Challenge Day piece, where youth are given different types of projects where-by they would need to pitch their ideas to a group of panelists towards the end of the camp.

The board of panelists comprises leaders from different fields. Through this session, the camp aims to inspire and connect youth with prominent leaders from all over the country.

**SCHOOL LEAVERS CAMP**

Through DIODE, Leaderonomics Youth has also developed a camp to cater to youth aged 17 to 19 to prepare them for their transition from high school to tertiary education and the working world.

The camp highlights include career sharing by successful individuals from various fields. This aims to expose youths to the different types of careers available for them as they chart their career paths.

This camp also focuses on providing youth with guidance in coming up with their personal development plans. The School Leavers Camp is definitely something not to be missed by youth who want to further explore where their true passion lies.

**BUILDING FUTURE LEADERS**

All in all, the DIODE series of camps are exciting and fun-filled, allowing participants to truly explore their potential and bringing them up to the next level.

Leaderonomics Youth concentrates on providing hands-on experiences for its campers, and through these camps, participants will get to understand themselves better through various simulations and interactive game-based learning sessions.

Other than meeting new people from different backgrounds, campers will also be able to connect with great leaders who share the same passion in developing future generations.

Through the live projects, youth will not only learn about working together as a team, they will also be inspired to maximise their leadership potential and eventually impact their peers, communities and nation with the guidance of passionate mentors and facilitators.

**THEY WILL ALSO BE INSPIRED TO MAXIMISE THEIR LEADERSHIP POTENTIAL AND EVENTUALLY IMPACT THEIR PEERS, COMMUNITIES AND NATION WITH THE GUIDANCE OF PASSIONATE MENTORS AND FACILITATORS**

**DIODE YOUNGSTERS**

**SPARK LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME**

This year, ECM Libra Foundation is offering five lucky winners a “Leadership Ticket” to attend SPARK Leadership Programme, held at Epsom College from Dec 14–23, 2014.

Contestants are to give an “Elevator Pitch” (three minutes pitch) to a panel of judges, answering the following question:

“Name one problem your school/community is facing. In your opinion, what is the one thing you can do to help fix this?”

The SPARK Audition will be held on Nov 22, 2014, 9am-5pm, at the Leaderonomics office.

Details will be sent via email once your registration is confirmed.

To stand a chance to win, simply go to http://leaderonomics.org/reg/spark2014/

To register for the SPARK Audition, download, fill out, scan and return the form to spark@leaderonomics.com. Contest ends Nov 17, 2014.

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**IMPACTING THE YOUNG**

**DRIVING DIODE CAMPS AS CATALYSTS FOR CHANGE**

**BY MAJURA PERASHOT**

majura.perashot@leaderonomics.com

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**SCHOOL** can be a daunting place for children. Whether it’s about making friends or excelling in class, the pressure to succeed has never been more persistent.

This is why one of the most important lessons a child can receive in early education is a sense of empowerment; that they each have the ability and opportunity to have a bright future.

Through our DIODE Kids Programmes, these young ones are exposed to activities that will provide them with the basic tools to encourage them to think creatively and confidently.

We understand that as they are at a crucial point of their development, lots of positive encouragement on their strengths would go a long way towards their future.

They will have the opportunity to meet and interact with other children from various backgrounds and social creeds.

Superhero Academy is a one-day leadership programme which would help children to discover their true “super-power” and how they can use it to build themselves to be great leaders.

We have fun games, activities and experiential learning lined up for this event!

Superhero Academy will take place as per the details below:

**Date:** Nov 27, 2014 (Thursday)
**Time:** 9am to 5pm
**Venue:** Dewan Utama Bangunan Batik Siti Hasmah, 6, Cangkat Alang Haji Openg, Taman Tun Dr. Ismail, 60000, Kuala Lumpur.
**Price:** RM200*

*Lunch and tea breaks will be provided.

If you’re interested in signing up your child or would like to register someone you know, go to http://leaderonomics.org/youth/diode-leadership-camps/diode-kids/
This year, these 17 excellent companies succeeded in being in the leads in the following categories, with Maybank taking the win as the Leading Graduate Employer of 2014:

- **Pharmaceutical:** Pharmaniaga
- **Telecommunications:** Maxis Communications
- **Plantation/Property and Construction:** Sime Darby
- **Manufacturing - Electronics:** BMW Group (BMW, Mini, Rolls-Royce)
- **Manufacturing - Chemical and Heavy Industries:** Chemical Company of Malaysia (CCM)
- **Manufacturing - Automotive:** BMW Group (BMW, Mini, Rolls-Royce)
- **Leisure, Travel and Hospitality:** AirAsia
- **Insurance:** Great Eastern Life Assurance
- **ICT and Multimedia:** IBM Malaysia
- **Government-linked Companies:** Permodalan Nasional Berhad
- **FMCG/Retail:** Nestle
- **Energy/Oil and Gas/Utilities:** Shell Malaysia
- **Education:** Taylor’s Education Group
- **Consulting:** EY (Ernst & Young)
- **Broadcasting/Media:** Media Prima Group
- **Banking and Financial Services:** Maybank
- **Accounting and Professional Services:** EY (Ernst & Young)

More than 14,000 respondents took part in the survey in 2014, signifying a growth in the number of students and fresh graduates who have contributed to determining the latest graduate recruitment trends via a comprehensive study held across Malaysian campuses.

**WHO VOTED FOR THEM?**

- **Male:** 41.7%
- **Female:** 58.3%

**Main Subject of Study**
- Business & Economics: 49.7%
- Science: 6.5%
- Engineering: 20.7%
- Math/Statistics: 5.9%

**Academic Achievements**
- Poor achievement (bottom 25% of students): 0.4%
- Below average achievement (bottom 40% of students): 2.0%
- Average achievement: 48.1%
- Above average achievement (top 40% of students): 32.8%
- Outstanding achievement (top 25% of students): 14.4%

**How many applications do you expect to send to find your first professional position?**
- 13.6 applications

**How many years are you prepared to work in this position?**
- 4.6 years

**How many hours (per day) are you prepared to work in this position?**
- 8.1 hours

**How many months do you expect to need to find your first professional position?**
- 3.9 months

**Would you relocate for an attractive job offer?**
- Yes: 57.2%
- No: 42.8%

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