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MEASURING OUR LIVES

THE scene has been played countless times in movies. A well-to-do family sitting down for dinner, children poking disinterestedly at the feast before them, adults engaged in stilted conversation. In contrast, a family sharing a humble meal, boisterous and bursting with love and warmth.

How we measure our lives, I believe, boils down to purpose. To knowing what really matters. To not getting mired down by the yardstick of success revered by others.

Our newest contributor Parimala Thananbalasingam, a lecturer, shares her wisdom on how youth can chart their futures.

Speaking to young adults, Sabrina Kamaruddin explores on the scene with SMART goal setting and in addition to being specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound, does it measure up to the Sabrina standard? – are they shared, meaningful, ambitious, responsive and timeless?

So! Your goals have been set! Begs the question – what do you do next? Sandy Clarke addresses what you need in order to go from vision to completion.

Now you have reached your dizzying heights of success, let’s plan to soar even higher. Mitch Ditkoff, in "The Advantage: Why Organisations Win in the Age of The Unforeseen", talks to us about the odds, and with a healthy dose of positivity, the story of Stephen Hawking (and the equation for happiness) is told by Hyma Pillay.

In today’s hectic living, we are constantly looking for ways to get more done. Parimala Thananbalasingam explores the kick-off meeting at Leaderonomics last week saw another ambition shared – a desire to build a “castle” together with others. While setting your eyes on the horizon, what are the channels of accountability you have? What about the “heart matter” that is often showing real care for others amongst them? How do we involve these objectives in our strategic thinking capacity?

In short, where when, why and how we want to accomplish career goals at the beginning of the year as realistic, measurable and time-bound, are they dependent on the quality and relationships we have in our lifetime. Is your goal exclusively about building your own “throne”, or are you building a “castle” together with others?

MINDFULNESS
Mindfulness is the practice of cultivating a purposeful and focused awareness on the present moment. In today’s hectic living, we are constantly multitasking. Our minds are always distracted, making us absent mentally even though our body is present. John Dewey said, “A goal is a dream with a deadline.”

Question: What are the channels of accountability you have? Are you building a long-term relationship with your team members and customers?

Accountability
This is viewed as being answerable to somebody (including yourself) for something we have committed to do. Joseph Tan of Leaderonomics Good Monday mentioned that there is no use getting people in your organisation engaged if they are not accountable for their actions.

Question: What are the channels of communications you’re using (and how frequently) when presenting your “account” to your accountability partner(s)?

Let us explore a different kind of SMART.

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The opinions expressed in this career guide are those of the writers or the people they quoted and not necessarily those of Leaderonomics.
Immersed. We were completely immersed – two eggs submerged in the boiling water of creation, heat turned up, lid on, timer off.

Our walls? The walls of our abode? Covered with paper, sketches, scribbles, post-its, quotes, pictures, lists, charts, diagrams, questions, and take-out menus – the barely decipherable hieroglyphics of our journey into who knows where.

The floors? Our mothers would have had a heart attack, littered as they were with anything we didn’t have a place for. Rube Goldberg meets Fellini. Yin meets Yang meets Jung – the flora and fauna of two aspiring entrepreneurs on fire with possibility.

But our immersion went far beyond the four walls of our abode. It was a state of mind, not a geographical location.

It didn’t really matter where we were.

Walking by the creek or sitting in a bar was all the same to us, ruled as we were by our shared fascination, random silken threads of conversation with complete strangers, and the increasingly apparent sense that we were on to something big.

KNOCKING OF THE SENSES

And then, on the morning of the 13th day, very much at ease in our townhouse abode, there was a knock on the door – a loud and insistent knock, a knock both of us found rather odd since nobody knew where we lived – or so we thought.

"It’s open," Steven shouted from across the room.

"Go ahead and let yourself in," And there, at the threshold, stood a woman neither of us knew, a woman boldly announcing that, for the past three days, she’d been hearing about “these two creativity guys” and she just had to meet us, her business now on the cusp of either breaking through or breaking down.

I don’t remember a single thing of what we said, but whatever it was, it hit the nail on the head.

The next day, there was another knock on the door. Apparently, someone else had heard about our whereabouts.

This guy had a business, too, or was trying to have a business.

He spoke. We listened. He spoke some more. We listened some more, occasionally asking a question or two and sharing some insight. He too, got what he needed.

On the third day, there was another knock on the door – just enough proof to ally asking a question or two and sharing some insight. He too, got what he needed.

But this “nothing at all” wasn’t nothing at all. It was something – something grand and glorious. Something extraordinarily attractive.

Is a mother hen sitting on her egg doing nothing at all? Is she slacking? Is her seeming disappearance from the poultry marketplace a sign of irresponsibility?

To the casual observer, maybe that’s what it looks like, but nothing could be further from the truth.

Sitting is exactly what the mother hen needs to do in order to bring new life into the world. Stillness, not action, is her path.

Did Steven and I accomplish what we thought we did? Did Steven and I accomplish what we thought we did?

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**The Awesome Power of Immersion**

**Translation?** One of the secrets to having a big breakthrough is immersion – “the state of being deeply engaged, involved, or absorbed”.

Immersion is the ocean in which our fabulous insights, ideas, and illuminations are swimming. That’s why Yogis seek out fabulous insights, ideas, and illuminations from the gravity of what we already knew.

And every night before we went to bed, we’d remind each other to remember our dreams and speak them aloud the first thing in the morning.

STATE OF MIND

**Not Just Location**

Clues. We were looking for clues, hints, perfumed handkerchiefs dropped by our perfumed handkerchiefs. We were looking for clues, hints, perfumed handkerchiefs dropped by our senses. Crackpots? No. More like crockpots, simmering in our minds, unimpaired.

Crackpots? No. More like crockpots, simmering in our minds, unimpaired. By the almost infinite amount of distractions we had 206 days and 30 nights when it was time for us to start up our company. We knew we had a great idea for a business, but we also knew that ideas were a dime a dozen and that unless we really immersed we’d end up with nothing much more than a charming story to tell at cocktail parties – the idea for a business, but not the business itself.

Armed with little more than a flip chart, a few marking pens, and a burning desire to create something new, we unplugged from all our other commitments and jumped in with both feet.

We talked. We walked. We walked our talk. We noodled. We conjugated. We brainstormed, blue-skied, dialogued, role-played, invented, read, sang, stretched, drank coffee, wine, the crisp Colorado air, and whatever else it took to free ourselves from the gravity of what we already knew.

And there, at the threshold, stood a woman neither of us knew, a woman boldly announcing that, for the past three days, she’d been hearing about “these two creativity guys” and she just had to meet us, her business now on the cusp of either breaking through or breaking down.

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**Breakthrough from ‘Nothing’**

**Be a Leader**

By MITCH DITKOFF
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"If I had an hour to solve a problem, I’d spend the first 55 minutes thinking about the problem, and the last five solving it."

– Albert Einstein

Saturday 17 January 2015
SO YOU WANT TO BE OUTSTANDING

By IAN CHEW
editor@leaderonomics.com

"I'm the president of this student club at my university..."

"I play on the school basketball team..."

"I volunteer at the local community association..."

HERE'S nothing wrong with treading the same path as those before. In fact, activities like the ones mentioned above are highly valuable for ourselves and others. But if you're thinking of truly standing out from the crowd, chances are you should try a different road.

Being able to differentiate yourself from the average Joe is Personal Branding 101. You want to make a distinct, memorable impression on the people you meet, whether they're new friends, teachers, potential clients, or others.

One way to develop a powerful personal brand is to start an interesting project that will help showcase your ingenuity and talents.

Here are some steps to decide on your project:

1. **FIND OUT WHAT YOU'RE GOOD AT**
   - jot down a few things you like doing. Perhaps, think about ways of combining your interests in the context of your new project.
   - For example, I like photography and I like telling stories. So maybe I can do a visual journalism project.
   - If you aren't really sure about what you enjoy doing, make a list of activities you think you would like to do and go try them out! It is only by doing that you will find out what you're good at, and what you want to get better at.
   - Overthinking your plans is unproductive, and can lead to ballooning self-doubt and uncertainty. Just take action!

2. **FIND OUT IF PEOPLE LIKE WHAT YOU'RE GOOD AT**
   - Our reality is largely influenced by other people. If most people aren't interested in your skills or talents, what you're good at won't necessarily gain much recognition. Assuming that some kind of outside recognition is one of your project's goals, you should talk to people before starting the project, to determine if others would see value in it.
   - Discuss it with members of your community, trusted connections, or just people who are willing to chat in the cafe. (Avoid only asking your friends and family, who may care too much about your feelings to be completely honest!)
   - If these people don't seem to care about your project idea, do they have another need you might be able to fulfill? Try listening carefully to see if you can find a common trend of need or want among the people you talk with. You might not be going down the expected path, but life is full of surprises.

3. **FIND THE SWEET SPOT BETWEEN 1 AND 2, AND START YOUR NEW PROJECT!**
   - Once you know what you like doing, and what social demand you can meet – start your new project!
   - If you need funding, you can apply to different organisations depending on the nature of your project, or set up a crowdfunding page.
   - If you need any kind of help, do remember to reach out to those whom you see as potential contributors or even project partners.

If your work does have social value as we mentioned in point 2, you will attract at least a few supporters.

So, go kickstart your ideas now!

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SLOWING DOWN AND GOING DEEP: TRUMPS SPEEDING UP AND GOING CRAZY. IMMERSION TRUMPS DIVERSION.

We tweet, we delete, we tap our feet, but all too often nothing much beyond the status quo ever really happens.

Downtime has become an anathema – the province of "B-list" players. Busyness and business have become synonymous. The assumption? The more we do and the faster we do it, the more success we'll have.

Boil an egg? Ha! We microwave it. Dive in? No way. We hydroplane. But it doesn't have to be that way. It really doesn't.

SLOwING down and going deep trumps speeding up and going crazy.

Immersion trumps diversion. It's possible. Yes, it is. I have proof.

And so do you, if only you would pause long enough to remember those extraordinary times when you unplugged, tuned in, and dove into your own process of creating something new and wonderful.

**QUESTIONS FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION**

What can you do, this week, this month, or this quarter, to unplug from the daily grind and give yourself the luxury of immersion?

Where will you go? When? And who will you invite to accompany you, if anyone?

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By SANDY CLARKE  
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FROM VISION TO COMPLETION  
WHAT TO DO AFTER SETTING YOUR GOALS

O, you have a goal. That’s all you need, right? A vision of what you’d like to achieve tossed with a motivational maxim and you’re good to go.  

All you need to do now is sit and wait for the cosmos to hear your call, align the planets, and deliver your fortune.  

That was the sum of my grand strategy when, at the age of 18, I resolved to “have some money” to buy a new car.  

By the end of the year, I had amassed just enough wealth to buy a new car. The cosmos was obviously run on low charge that year. Or something.  

My goal, of course, failed because I had failed to recognise that, in setting out an objective – no matter the size – there needs to be a proper strategy in place, i.e. a strategy driven by focus, realistic awareness and commitment to the outcome.  

Looking back, my “strategy” was only going to succeed with the help of a lamp housing a genie. Only going to succeed with the help of a lamp housing a genie.  

Dream on. To be fair to those who have visions, they can be tough to realise, but rarely impossible. How much of ourselves we invest in achieving a goal will determine the level of return we get back.  

Whether our dreams of success lie in our professional or personal lives, it is vital to avoid falling into the trap of idealistic expectation. Instead, we need to realise the reality that behind any success, it takes effort, time, and commitment on our part to achieve anything we set our hearts on.  

Even those who are already successful and, in the minds of many, “have everything” they need to maintain incredible focus and drive whenever they set new goals. Oprah Winfrey, the American billionaire and TV mogul, is famous for her relentless pursuit of self-improvement in learning a particular skill, living outside her comfort zone, or deepening her spiritual awareness.  

Like any competent person, she is aware that success isn’t just about what you do to get there; it’s also dependent on who you are.  

Know thyself. The more you can invest in yourself beyond your college degree, the more likely you’ll stay on course to achieve whatever goal you set.  

With that in mind, it’s also important to get to know yourself. You can read books on success, collate interesting quotes, and listen to inspiring talks, but you need to know where you are starting from.  

Be honest about your strengths and weaknesses and – as in Winfrey’s example – work on improving your skillset and personal communication skills.  

There is no sense in looking to establish a career in banking if you have poor numeracy skills and lack the ability to network. However, that doesn’t mean you can’t develop and hone those skills in order to turn your dream into a reality.  

Keep growing. When setting out your vision, allow progress to come one day at a time.  

Keep your eye on the finishing line and make sure each step you take is manageable, achievable and conducive to your overall success. As the American President Abraham Lincoln once said: “I may walk slowly, but I never walk back.”  

Lincoln was a man revered for his capacity to captivate his audience with stirring speeches, wise words and comical tales; and yet, he was also a man who received less than one year formal schooling and taught himself how to write. A voracious reader and keen observer, he knew the value of investing in his own potential and, in time, his efforts paid off, leading him to the White House, and ensuring an indelible legacy as one of the world’s most effective and inspiring leaders.  

Rooted in values While it’s easy to become insular when charting your vision, don’t forget the value of those around you in terms of the impact they can have on your future. Actively seek out people you feel are smarter, wiser and more experienced than you.  

The motivational speaker, Jim Rohn, offered a valuable reminder to us when he said: “You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with.” The English actor and author, Stephen Fry, expanded on that statement when describing his education at Cambridge University. He insisted that, while his professors were brilliant in their teachings, he learnt most from discussions and debates with the friends he had around him. Never underestimate the potential value of input people can have on your vision’s journey: a single line of thought can open up avenues you never before considered.  

Sheer grit Remember that success doesn’t come overnight. No beginner, for example, has ever walked into a gym and become a bodybuilding champion within the first month. The reason why many people fail to succeed is because they lack the perseverance to stick it out. In other words, they do not have grit. What is grit? It’s the quality that defines a person’s capacity to stomach the toughest times, endure failures and press on despite setbacks encountered along the way.  

If you are passionate about what you want, your grit will prove to you sooner or later that it is impossible to fail if you never give up.  

Attitude is vital When asked what was the most important factor dependent on success, Scotland’s first self-made billionaire Sir Tom Hunter was unequivocal in his response: “Attitude trumps aptitude, every time.”  

It is essential to put yourself in the driver’s seat when setting out your vision. You have to be in control of the process in order to reach your desired outcome. The strength of any vision relies solely on the strength of your dedication and commitment towards your own future.  

Concluding thoughts In his book, Man’s Search for Meaning, the noted psychologist Viktor Frankl gives us the bottom-line on what makes or breaks us.  

“Ultimately, man should not ask what the meaning of his life is, but rather must recognise that it is he who is asked.”  

“In a word, each man is questioned by life; and he can only answer to life by answering for his own life; to life he can only respond by being responsible.”  

Sandy Clarke is a journalist in the UK with years of experience in journalism, public relations and communications, and was press officer to the Scottish Government at one time. Send in your feedback to editor@leaderonomics.com. For more leadership insights, go to www.leaderonomics.com
STARTING THEM S.M.A.R.T. SETTING GOALS THE PROPER WAY

By SABRINA KAMARUDDIN
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S
ince you’re interested in having goal setting workshops in your university, email me and we can discuss what I can offer you.

For more personal empowerment you’re interested in having goal-setting workshops in your college, email me and we can discuss what I can offer you.

I am not too long ago, in a conversation about my long-term dreams, a friend asked me what my deadline was to achieve it. I had not really thought about it, but I told him, “Maybe in 10 years.” He responded, “That’s too long. Do it five.” At that point I was shocked and amazed it was a short and ambitious goal. Since then, however, my five-year plan has reduced to three, and I now have a detailed strategy on how to get there.

What I learnt is that most of us have thought about what we want, however vague it looks, but we dismiss it as a far-fetched goal and visualise ourselves nowhere to achieve it.

A comfortable 10-year plan is distant, but when you break it down to five, you become ready and willing to go the extra mile in and around it, which is what you want.

Why it’s important to have clear goals:

Focus: Knowing what you really want, and avoiding wasting time on things that don’t matter to you.

Motivation: Clear goals pressure you into making difficult choices worth going through.

Accountability: By choosing your goal, it makes it easy to tell others (and yourself) what you’re up to, which in turn helps you stick to them.

FORMING A SMART GOAL FOR YOURSELF

The reason most people never reach their goals is that they don’t define them, or even seriously consider them to be achievable or achievable. Dreams can tell you where you are going, but what they don’t tell you is what you are doing about the adventure with them.” – Denis Waitley

Let’s do a goal-setting exercise using S.M.A.R.T., which stands for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound (or a variation of those words).

This soft tool, commonly attributed to George Goal, is worth remembering: it is a great way to form productive and effective goals, both personal and professional (take a look at what this man has done).

You will want to start by thinking about your goals (whether long or short), and then ask these questions:

1 IS IT SPECIFIC?

Specific goals are specific. Take time to go in details.

What does it look like? How does it feel?

What are the things you will have? Who are the people you will interact with?

This is so specific that you can spend 15 minutes describing your dreams, that’s even better.

When it is specific, you will be able to zoom in and focus on attaining the smaller parts of the larger goal.

A career has become a career goal for example, think about the ideal work environment, salary, geography, or position that you hope to reach.

Do you have to lead a large team one day? Does this job entail travelling and meeting people often?

The more specific your goal, the easier it is to break it down into smaller parts, and what decisions will lead you to it.

2 IS IT MEASURABLE?

Powerful goals are specific. Take time to go in details.

What does it look like? How does it feel?

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Do you have to lead a large team one day? Does this job entail travelling and meeting people often?

The more specific your goal, the easier it is to break it down into smaller parts, and what decisions will lead you to it.

Some detours are worth making, yet be careful not to get too carried away.

1. What are your main goals?
2. What values will I never let go?
3. How much hardship can I handle?
4.  What are my interests?
5. What can I imagine for my life?
6. What are my core values?
7. What do I really want to be when I grow up?
8. What do you want to do when you have a lot of money?
9. What do you want to be when you are older?

A comfortable 10-year plan is distant, but when you break it down to five, you become ready and willing to go the extra mile in and around it, which is what you want. Even when a good part of your goal has been achieved years before, you can imagine yourself being 70 and still proud of your dreams.

4 IS IT RESPONSIVE?

More of an attitude than a characteristic, responsiveness is key. Allow your goals to grow with you, and respond to changes of situation and commitment projects. Goals should be empowering, and not make you feel overwhelmed.

A goal is only powerful when your heart, mind, and values are in line with your goals.

5 IS IT SHARED?

Relationship is an important part of your life, yet often overlooked. What you want should matter to those who matter to you—family, partner friends, and maybe even people at work. Think about the people you want to journey together, and also the kind of people you want to meet along the way.

Which is why in the next part of the exercise, I have added a second SMART theme: Shared, Meaningful, Ambitious, Resourced, and Timely:

6 IS IT MEANINGFUL?

Meaningful goals reflect your personal values, and aspects of your life that matter to you. Smaller decisions lead toward your greater goals, and each of them should matter to you. Some decisions may berelevant, but will never show up in your life because it does not resonate with your values.

If your answer is no, then go back to the last part of the exercise, and change your goal. Some goals may seem too ambitious in the beginning, but become manageable once you take the right steps toward achieving your goal.

7 IS IT AMBITIOUS?

Do not be intimidated by fear, be resourceful. And have the right set of skills and knowledge to achieve these. Ask yourself, is this the right set of skills and knowledge to achieve these?

That’s why it is important to reflect and resent whether your goals are attainable at a particular point in time, and whether you have the right set of skills and knowledge to achieve these.

A simple goal statement should sound like this:

“By 20, I want to create things that the public can, hundreds of thousands of them, imagine and have made. I want to do this in five years.”

And while the SMART criteria will ensure productivity, you and I can have personal or professional projects.

Let’s do a goal-setting exercise using S.M.A.R.T., which stands for Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound (or a variation of those words).

This soft tool, commonly attributed to George Goal, is worth remembering: it is a great way to form productive and effective goals, both personal and professional (take a look at what this man has done).

You will want to start by thinking about SMART criteria (whether long or short), and then ask these questions:

Questions to ask: Can I achieve this now? If not, when? And what can I do in the meantime?

If my own goal-setting journey has taught me anything, it is this: You have to make career changes and make career changes and stop travelling before I turn 30. Whatever that job is, I will have certain conditions for the public that has positively affected the lives of 10 million children around Malaysia.

If you’re unsure about where to start, create a mood board.

Look for things that inspire and excite you, and things that you want, and don’t limit yourself! Look out for people, words, adjectives and images that you want to be associated with.

The mood board can be a literal one, or on your room wall or laptop, or it can be a mental picture of your future.

How are your mood boards?

Are you creating a mood board?

7 DREAM-CATCHING QUESTIONS

1. What kind of lifestyle do I want?
2. Who do I want to be in my life, and have I achieved my goals?
3. How much hardship can I handle?
4. What values will I never let go?
5. Who do I admire?
6. How much impact do I want to make in the world?
7. What do I enjoy doing most?

CONCLUDING CONCLUSIONS

If my own goal-setting journey has taught me anything, it is this: You have to make career changes and make career changes and stop travelling before I turn 30. Whatever that job is, I will have certain conditions for the public that has positively affected the lives of 10 million children around Malaysia.
I was with mixed feelings that I watched the final movie that crowns Peter Jackson’s considerable homage to J.R.R. Tolkien.

Mixed feelings, because I was excited to see what Jackson had dreamt up for us, but sad it was the end of the saga.

The Hobbit – The Battle of the Five Armies is the last instalment of Jackson’s Hobbit trilogy, and the sixth movie after the Lord of the Rings (LOTR) trilogy which began in 2001.

But fear not, this isn’t yet another review discussing the various merits and failings of Jackson’s Hobbit movies versus LOTR.

Instead, I’d like to take a short journey through an underlying theme in The Hobbit.

The Battle of the Five Armies opens with the fabulous sight of an immense dragon speeding towards the town of Dale, hell-bent on utter destruction.

Smaug, after a long reign in the halls of the dwarves’ kingdom, declared himself – “I am fire. I am destruction.”

Having defeated the uncle in his claim to your rightful kingdom, you stand there, unable to rejoice, but fearfully planning how you should defend this treasure against thieves.

For all his bravado against visible challenges – the Lonely Mountain, Smaug – Thorin was overcome with fear and suspicion of unseen enemies.

WHAT SETS THORIN APART?

Imagines for a moment, that you unexpectedly win a billion ringgit inheritance from your rival claimant, a scheming old uncle.

Having defeated the uncle in his claim to your rightful kingdom, you stand there, unable to rejoice, but fearfully planning how you should defend this treasure against thieves.

For all his bravado against visible challenges – the Lonely Mountain, Smaug – Thorin was overcome with fear and suspicion of unseen enemies.

THE FEAR FACTOR

Since the dawn of human thought and reasoning, fear has been one of our favourite themes in philosophy, psychology and the arts.

Humans are fascinated, even mesmerised, by fear, and we desire not only to understand it, but find some sort of surefire way to conquer it.

Psychology Today summarises fear as a “vital response to physical and emotional danger...from legitimate threats.”

It is an intangible but intensely powerful force that can move a man’s heart as strongly as other passions.

It’s a force so gripping that we see Thorin’s character and moral compass shaken, so that he appears as twisted as Smaug himself.

Truth be told, Thorin’s fears have become his personal “dragon”.

‘DRAGONS’ IN OUR LIVES?

It’s a question that many of us are unwilling to face.

The Greek philosopher Plato (427–347 BC) said, “We can easily forgive an ox who is afraid of the dark; the real tragedy of life is when men are afraid of light.”

When all hope seemed lost in Tolkien’s world, there was a hobbit. Bilbo stood up to many fearsome challenges in his journey with the dwarves – trolls, goblins, Gollum, orcs, elves, and of course, Smaug.

Compared with Thorin, Bilbo was far less accustomed to dealing with these situations, and yet he stood his ground.

What was different in the way Bilbo responded to fear, so that fear didn’t overwhelm him?

Quite clearly, Bilbo had courage. And you and I know that that is much easier said than done.

COURAGE; A FIRM FOUNDATION

So how do we gain courage enough to stare in the face of overwhelming odds, and stand firm?

All the more when one feels like a hobbit – they are neither the strongest, fastest, or smartest folk around, and without magic powers too.

Bilbo’s courage to confront his dragons must come from somewhere, and when you look deeply into Bilbo’s intentions, it becomes clear that courage cannot stand firm on a foundation that is easily shaken.

Thorin’s courage in facing adversity came from his desire to meet certain expectations which he set up for himself.

An exiled heir, a kingdomless king, a powerless ruler – all these formed his identity and self-worth.

His identity as “Thorin” could not be complete if he could not fully restore the factors which formed his external identity, including regaining the kingdom, the treasure trove, and the king’s jewel – the Arkenstone.

Sadly for Thorin, he had to pay the highest price to learn that a foundation built on external motivations is easily shaken and crumbled.

Fear itself twisted Thorin’s motivations and distorted his character beyond recognition.

FAITH: AN INNER CONVICTION

In contrast, Bilbo’s courage grew from an inner conviction that was not so easily shaken by fear.

He had such faith in his moral compass, choosing always to value lives over material wealth, that he was willing to make tough decisions by giving away his share of the treasure and risking his relationship with the dwarves.

Bilbo’s inner identity was so secure, that his character could stay true and unspoiled throughout his many trials. His courage stemmed from keeping a pure heart and an unrelenting faith in what he believed.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Last year was one of “drag-ons” and ordeals for our nation, but it was a year of the ordinary Malaysian too, the everyman like Bilbo.

This too, is my wish – that on the journey ahead, all of us in 2015 will remember to cling to what’s good and true, with the courageous heart of a hobbit.

I bid 2014 farewell with a reminder of Thorin’s last words: “Go back to your armour, Master Burglar. And your books. Plant your tree. If everybody valued food, and cheer like you did, the world would be a merrier place.”

Y-Wen is part of the learning and acceleration team in Leaderonomics and is eagerly waiting to run a 16-hour Hobbit and Lord of the Rings movie marathon in the office. Or perhaps read the books again for the sixth time. Connect with her at editor@leaderonomics.com. For more Movie Wisdom articles, go to www.leaderonomics.com
PE RSONAL grooming is about presenting yourself in the best possible way. It tells people what you think of yourself. Self-grooming is not about vanity. In fact, proper grooming takes the “spotlight” away from yourself. With proper grooming, no one’s going to focus on, “Gosh, she looks so pale and untidy”, or “Did you see those dirty fingernails?”

Personal grooming for nails means they should always be clean and shaped. Ideally, nails should be polished or buffed, or coated with a clear protective coat. Whether your nails should be long or short, it really depends on your lifestyle and profession. Dirty fingernails are a rude shock, not to mention their harm to health. Not forgetting your toenails too. Like a great new haircut, healthy and well-manicured nails are an integral part of a neat appearance – one that can work as an asset in both the social and business world.

NAIL GROOMING: THE PROFESSIONAL WAY

In the business world, there is a wealth of information available on traditional business dress, but very little on how to dress both casually and professionally. Likewise when it comes to nail grooming, there is no proper guidance as to what is professionally and socially accepted. Hands and fingernails are noticed by others and contribute to one’s professional image. No matter the industry or position, fingernails must be cared for on a regular basis, either by the individual or a nail care professional. In general, men’s nails should be short, clean, and filed smooth with no ragged cuticles. Women’s cuticles should be smooth and nails should match in length – if they choose to wear nail polish, it must be maintained or removed as soon as it chips. In conservative industries, women’s nails usually extend no longer than about 1/4” beyond the fingertip. Colours can be light or dark in the traditional shades of pink, red, rose, peach, and coral.

Avoid trendy colours at work, as well as artistic designs and appliqués. A pedicure is a plus for any professional woman who wishes to wear sandals or open-toe shoes to the office, especially if she frequently deals with customers and clients. In more informal or liberal industries, longer lengths are usually acceptable along with trendy colours, designs, and appliqués.

The rule of thumb is: the more you deal with a client’s money, family or future, the more conservative a role you should present.

NAILS BY INDUSTRY SEGMENTATION

Industries such as finance, law, accounting, health care and insurance should project a conservative and professional image to the public. For more flexible industries such as information technology, real estate, travel, manufacturing, publishing and education, one can present a more casual business image on a daily basis. In the creative industries such as advertising, public relations and entertainment, one can choose nail design to reflect the latest trends. This may be a blend of traditional with business casual, but should always have a fashion-forward look.

THE DO’S AND DON’TS OF NAIL CARE

Keeping your fingernails looking their best doesn’t take a lot of time, but it does require some regular care. Cuticles should be moisturised and groomed, and nails should be properly trimmed, filed and protected. Just follow these simple tips to enjoy healthy and beautiful nails (See Table 1):

Colours for the Workplace

Picking a nail polish colour that is appropriate for the office can get a little tricky. As colour trends vary, the goal is to choose a colour that will enhance your personality while still appearing professional. The fact is most colours can appear professional as long as you choose the right shades. Therefore, always aim for the darker side of the colour spectrum such as deep red, rosy pink, emerald green and navy blue. These colours are warmer than their bright counterparts and are more appropriate for work.

Bright colours such as yellow, fiery red, aqua green or other neon colours are not recommended for work as they can be very distracting for you and your co-workers. There are occasions when just one solid colour is not enough.

Here are some options to “spice” things up without losing the professionalism:

French tip

When the tip of your nails are painted a different colour from the base. With this option, a bolder colour can be used for the tips because they will occupy a smaller portion of the nail.

This significantly lessens the “crackle” effect of bright colours. You can even get away with applying sparkle or shimmer to the tips.

Crackle

The “crackle” trend is becoming very popular. This is when one base colour is applied and the second colour is meant to go unevenly, causing the nails to look “crackled”.

Nail art

Nail art is acceptable in the workplace as long as the design is appropriate. Many nail salons offer these creative designs. Just remember to stay with the colour rule.
DO LEAVE A BREATH AND A SPACE FOR WHAT MAY BE CALLED LUCK, CHANCE, BEING IN THE RIGHT PLACE AT THE RIGHT TIME, KARMA, THE GRACE OF GOD, OR SERENDIPITY.

CHOICES AND CHALLENGES

“It is our choices... that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities.”

The wisdom of Albus Dumbledore, headmaster of Hogwarts, from the magical kingdom of Harry Potter also rings true in real life.

Your future career, area of study, maybe even the countries you may be lucky enough to travel to and the choices you make now, whether small or large are going to determine to a large extent the satisfaction you will derive from life.

Too scary for a 16- or 17-year-old, even scarier than Conjuror? Yet it is such a thrilling time too!

Dr Seuss in his poem “Oh, The Places You Will Go” describes it so well when he says that as you have brains in your head and feet in your shoes, you already have all the equipment you need to steer yourself in any direction you choose.

READY TO BE SMART?

The public and corporate sectors use S.M.A.R.T. objectives (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time-based) to determine and improve efficiency in their organisations. It may also help you make the right choices in your life right now as you see that you have come to a place where there are many forks in the road and you cannot see around the corner.

Do try to write one simple sentence on what you wish to achieve in say, three years’ time and what you must accomplish now to get there.

You must be realistic with regards your abilities and finances within this timeline. Sounds simple, but try to get your parents or other adults to give their opinions as well.

Still, do not entirely base your idea of success and happiness on other people’s opinions and expectations.

Companies may take their entire workforce away for three days to do this sort of planning, so understand that it can be difficult.

Don’t forget to have fun as well. Nothing’s more amusing than doing what people say you can’t do. Now, if only you could somehow combine both and help make the world a better place all at the same time!

This is what is often called the work-life balance. As smart as we try to be, sometimes life has a way of eluding nice, neat little definitions as “everything that can be counted does not necessarily count and everything that counts cannot necessarily be counted” (Albert Einstein).

PASSION OR PERSEVERANCE?

Some of your lucky friends are already enrolled in courses, and going to classes this week. You are not sure what to do. Perhaps you would like to try a temporary job now, or an internship. Unfortunately, the one you managed to get was not to your liking.

Try to hang in there and pick up generic and soft skills like communicating the right message and working in teams with people of different age groups while you are counting change at the cash register or washing the dishes in a kopitiam.

In a study titled Grit: Perseverance and Passion for Long-Term Goals (Journal of Personality and Social Psychology) researchers found that perseverance may be as essential as talent, to high accomplishment.

They encouraged children to work with intensity and stamina, cautioning that young people should anticipate failure and misfortune before reaching their goals.

Excellence in any discipline requires time, and even Malcolm Gladwell’s 10,000 hours of practice to master a skill does not fulfill all the criteria required to be an expert.

UNIVERSITIES, SCHOLARSHIPS, COMMUNITY COLLEGES OR MOOC

I have been fortunate to have followed the lives of some of my students over the years.

One student had 10 As and was one of a three-student team that had made the school proud by winning the Creative and Innovative design awarded by F3 in Schools in Britain that year. Despite all efforts, none managed to get local scholarships.

Most of the community was aghast, but the boys did not miss a beat.

Getting another string of As for the A-levels at a nearby college, he won a scholarship for engineering sponsored partly by Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the United States. He has now graduated, was a member of “Engineers without Borders” and is currently working as a mechanical design engineer in New York.

Another student tried locally for a training programme for teachers. At that time she was unable to gain entrance.

She persuaded her parents to send her to the United States for a four-year programme in mathematics and a Masters degree following which she joined the Teach for America programme as a fellow serving in an underperforming school in Kansas.

> TURN TO PAGE 11
HOW WILL YOU MEASURE YOUR LIFE?

By KAREN NEOH
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With the advent of Facebook, I have been fortunate to reconnect with a multitude of friends – many of whom I haven’t seen since we were in navy blue pinafores (and boys running around in their primary school uniforms!). I have gasped with unabashed admiration at the heights they have achieved – running very successful restaurants and businesses, highly-sought after for their areas of expertise – and yet others marching to the beat of their own drum.

From young, I realised that having a clear purpose and passion is essential in school, one of my professors talked about how we need to think deeply about our priorities in life and what success really means. He said that too many people, in the pursuit of their own career goals, would use the language of “I am doing this for us, for our family”, when their spouses and children ask why they are never home.

My professor asked us, “Did they ever ask if their families wanted this ‘success’? Have they prioritised their own needs, and simultaneously placed the guilt on their loved ones?”

Harvard Business School (HBS) professor Clay Christensen asked his students to consider these three questions:

1. How can I be sure that I’ll be happy in my career?
2. How can I be sure that my relationships with my spouse and my family become an enduring source of happiness?
3. How can I be sure I’ll stay out of jail?

“Though the last question sounds light-hearted, it’s not. Two of the 32 people in my Rhodes scholar class spent time in jail. Jeff Skilling of Enron fame was a classmate of mine at HBS. These were good guys – but something in their lives sent them off in the wrong direction,” says Christensen.

FOR LEADERS

Over the years, I have started to distinguish between those who are managers and those who are leaders.

In my book, a manager is someone who is able to develop a strategy and mobilise a team to execute it – to excel and meet targeted goals. That’s what has been agreed upon as measures of success for the company.

I believe that leaders go beyond that and make time to build people who are firmly grounded in ethics and values, creating a groundswell of talent that ultimately still hits the organisation’s goals.

“They are the most powerful and enduring source of happiness”, says Christensen.

Are you aspiring to be a leader? Or a great leader?

FOR STUDENTS

At a recent event, a young student asked an Ivy League professor how she might better prepare herself to be successful in applying for his university. She shared several areas she could work on, and ended with this: “Distinguish yourself beyond the academic elements. There are other dimensions like family and community. Demonstrate that there is more to you than just academic achievement; that you can help to change the Malaysia of the future.”

Step up, stand tall and inspire your peers to find their purpose and guiding light for life decisions.

> FROM PAGE 10

Many would have stayed in America. “My heart is in Malaysia and I want to help the children here,” she said. She is currently with Teach for Malaysia as a leadership development officer in mini, mentoring several new teachers there.

If you still cannot make up your mind, as Dr Seuss says there is The Waiting Place... for people just waiting. So, while waiting, give the Massively Open Online Courses a try.

Just about any field of interest is covered in EdX, Coursera, MIT open courseware and try http://www.mooc-list.com/ for the rest.

For a nominal sum, certificates of completion are awarded and may be useful in college or job applications.

In self-paced learning, you set your own goals (SMART) and you customise your learning. Do try to learn some unusual subjects just for fun (remember always insert fun as a short-term goal).

BEYOND SMART – THE MAGIC GOAL POSTER

In Forbes magazine, Amy Rees Anderson an entrepreneur and phi-lanthropist wrote on how by using just a bulletin board, a pair of scissors, and glue stick she put together pictures that represented exactly what she wanted.

As the difficult part was to figure out what was important, she asked, “What would I do if I wasn’t afraid?” She was careful to include some short-range, intermediate and long-range goals.

Ten years later, she was stunned to see that every single item on that poster had been accomplished. As the founder and managing partner of REES Capital with 1,000 employees, she also led her company to make US$377mil (RM1.4bil) in 2012.

Perhaps using this type of vision board would be easier for you than writing SMART goals as Professor Tony Buzan (of mind-mapping fame) says the language of the brain is images.

SMART, SUCCESS AND SPIRITUALITY

In his Stanford commencement speech in June 2005, Steve Jobs said, “You can’t connect the dots looking forward, you can only connect them looking backwards. So you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future.”

“You have to trust in something – your gut, destiny, life, karma, whatever. Because believing that the dots will connect down the road will give you the confidence to follow your heart even when it leads you off the well-worn path; and that will make all the difference.”

FINAL THOUGHTS

Do leave a breath and a space for the rest. As Christensen shares, “People who are driven to excel have this unconscious propensity to invest in their families and reinvest in their careers – even though intimate and loving relationships with their families are the most powerful and enduring source of happiness”.

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Step up, stand tall and inspire your peers to find their purpose and guiding light for life decisions.
**THE HAPPINESS EQUATION**

**ONE SHOULD ADD CURIOSITY AND LEARNING, MULTIPLY HARD WORK AND PERSEVERANCE, SUBTRACT SELF-LIMITING BELIEFS AND DIVIDE KNOWLEDGE TO OTHERS**

By HYMA PILLAY

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**S**hortly after his 21st birthday, Stephen William Hawking was diagnosed with a motor neuron disease, and was told that he only had two years to live. About a week ago, he celebrated his 73rd birthday. Hawking is a name that does not need much introduction. Known as one of the most brilliant minds in the world, he is famous for his theory on black holes and time.

Other than his genius equations and theories, Hawking is also well known for his positive spirit. Despite being bound to a wheelchair and not having any control over his movement, he constantly gives a positive vibe.

He never allows his disease to get in the way of his work and always keeps up a great sense of humour.

**FUN FACT**

In an interview with WIRED UK in 2013, Hawking stated that he would be an ideal villain for a James Bond film. He said, “My ideal role would be a baddie in a James Bond film. I think the wheelchair and the computer voice would fit the part.”

Hawking pushed through his most difficult times and went on to gain countless great achievements.

I believe that Hawking had the perfect mathematical equation for happiness, and here is how we can too.

1. **THERE WILL ALWAYS BE NEW THINGS TO LEARN FROM, IF YOU ARE CURIOUS ENOUGH**

“Remember to look up at the stars and not down at your feet. Try to make sense of what you see and wonder about what makes the universe exist. Be curious. And however difficult life may seem, there is always something you can do and succeed at. It matters that you don’t just give up.” — Hawking

This world we live in is constantly growing and developing in many ways. If we look out for it, there are countless new things we can learn every day.

Learning never stops. Look around your surroundings, even the people you spend time with. There is so much out there to learn from. Read a new book, meet a new friend, or sign up for a new class. If you pay more attention to the things around you, you might even learn something new just by going for a walk outside.

2. **DON’T SET LIMITS FOR YOURSELF**

“Concentrate on things your disability doesn’t prevent you doing well, and don’t regret the things it interferes with. Don’t be disabled in spirit as well as physically.” — Hawking

Despite his disease, Hawking never backed down from his research. He always found ways to conduct his work, and went on to publish numerous books, including bestsellers A Brief History of Time and The Universe in a Nutshell. Never set limitations for what you can achieve. Self-doubt and self-limitation often get in the way of achieving our goals.

Instead, start believing in yourself. If you truly set your mind to something, believe that you can achieve it through diligence and perseverance.

3. **PERSEVERE**

“It is no good getting furious if you get stuck. What I do is keep thinking about the problem but work on something else. Sometimes it is years before I see the way forward. In the case of information loss and black holes, it was 29 years.” — Hawking

Hawking family photographs, shared by them for the film The Theory Of Everything.

When things don’t work out the way we want it to, giving up always seems like the easiest option.

Our mind and body are conditioned for survival, therefore it is only natural to think “run” when the obstacles placed before us are too big to overcome.

Obstacles are just temporary, and personally, I believe that difficult times are the best teachers in life. They make you stronger and wiser. When you face your next obstacle, instead of running away, run towards it!

4. **SHARE YOUR KNOWLEDGE**

“I hope I have helped to raise the profile of science and to show that physics is not a mystery but can be understood by ordinary people.” — Hawking

Hawking was always a firm believer that knowledge should be shared. Through his books and lectures, he made it easy for people to understand his theories by communicating it clearly.

We have different skills and different things that we learn from (especially if we put point 1 to practice). Put your wisdom to good use and share it with others. I believe that knowledge is one of the most precious gifts one can ever receive.

**IN CONCLUSION**

Hawking is a man who defeated the odds and pushed through huge obstacles. He is an inspiration and an excellent role model to many. If Hawking could do it, so can you.

To be content and happy, both in your career and personal life, one should add curiosity and learning, multiply hard work and perseverance, subtract self-limiting beliefs and divide knowledge to others.

“There should be no boundary to human endeavours. However bad life may seem, while there is life, there is hope.” — Hawking

Hyma Pillay enjoys learning new things. She is especially fond of doing this by speaking to people, as she believes that each individual has unique gifts and wisdom, and that there’s always so much you can learn from the people around you. You can email her at editor@leaderonomics.com. For more inspirational thoughts, visit www.leaderonomics.com

Also next week

**Leading a path of innovation**

A business case of ‘David vs Goliath’

How to read books

10 factors towards climate change