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BOSSES: WHAT MAKES THEM TICK?

WHEN our team chose the theme “Deconstructing Bosses”, I realise I set myself up to write about my boss in the same issue. My boss was to write about bosses in general. A younger form of myself might have been hesitant, but it is precisely the point of many an author in this issue that open dialogue and understanding of what drives team members (including its leaders) are essential ingredients for high performing teams. With his wealth of years working in different countries and types of businesses, Roshan Thiran teases out what makes a good boss, and also a bad boss, offering practical advice on how to become the former.

On a related note, Mitch Ditkoff asserts that the role of managers should evolve if employees are to feel empowered to think, challenge the status quo and contribute to the growth of a company.

Looking at relationships between leaders and their teams, we decided to revisit the call to “manage your boss” which first came more than three decades ago, to see how this advice holds in the light of today’s workplace dynamics. But don’t bosses need to understand themselves too? Chris Roeback reiterates that collaboration between leaders and their teams is the key to success — saying that it’s now more about “we” than “me”. And Victor Tan shares his experiences of seeing and addressing the irrational behaviour of leaders when faced with the need for change.

There’s introspection, then there’s looking deep into how our brains function! Travis Bradberry helps us understand how we can increase our emotional intelligence, and indeed the impact it has on our professional success. Jonathan Yabut expounds on an area I still need to work on! Knowing that it is your right to say “no”, knowing when and how to say “no” and being deliberate in focusing and becoming great at 1–2 big things.

Not satisfied with just knowing when to say “no”, Elsa Dass poses the question “Would you stand up and disagree strongly with your boss if his/her decisions are obviously wrong?” and poses the question “Would you stand up and disagree strongly how you act and how others (your employees) are like when they are with you, is something every boss should practise.

RELATIONAL

Being mindful of how your actions influence the people and environment around you, and in turn how the people and environment influence your behaviour can give you insights into how certain work-related problems are triggered and maintained.

A boss that understands how the different aspects of an organisation interact will know the best possible way to manage that organisation.

RESPECT

Next, a good boss would also know how to treat their employees with the respect they deserve. As the golden rule decrees, “do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” Employees should know that their boss values the effort and quality of their work. Knowing that they are appreciated motivates them to continue working to the best of their abilities.

Creating an environment of trust and support is another attribute of a great boss. A boss who puts his/her trust in his/her employees and supports their ideas indicates that he/she believes in the abilities of the people in the organisation.

For employees, trusting their boss to make the right decisions is also a sign that their boss is a good leader.

RESOURCES

Lastly, great bosses are able to provide their employees with the resources they need in order to perform their absolute best at work. Resources can be anything from direction to training. They should be provided in a way that allows employees to take pride in their own work.

CONCLUSION

Keep in mind that along with all these characteristics, believing in your own abilities is one of the most important attributes to have in order to be a successful, great boss.

Once you are confident in yourself, you will be able to emulate these other qualities not only in the workplace, but in other areas as well.

KAREN NEOH
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Qualities of a Great Boss

By Tara Thiagarajan
tara.thiagarajan@leaderonomics.com

What makes bosses great? What can bosses do to improve their organisations?

These are some of the questions that may come to mind when one is considering taking on the challenge of becoming a boss in their organisation.

According to Harvard Business School Professor Linda Hill, being aware of how you act and how others (your employees) are like when they are with you, is something every boss should practise.

Resourceful

Keeping in mind that along with all these characteristics, believing in your own abilities is one of the most important attributes to have in order to be a successful, great boss.

Once you are confident in yourself, you will be able to emulate these other qualities not only in the workplace, but in other areas as well.

The opinions expressed in this career guide are those of the writers or the people they quoted and not necessarily those of Leaderonomics.
RETHINKING THE ROLE OF A MANAGER

BY MITCH DITKOFF
editor@leaderonomics.com

The root of the word “manager” comes from the same root as the words “manipulate” and “manoeuvre”, meaning to “adapt or change something to suit one’s purpose”. Although these words may carry a pejorative meaning, there is nothing inherently wrong with them. Indeed, into each life a little manipulation and manoeuvring must fall.

For example, if the door to your office gets stuck, a handyman might need to manipulate it to get it working again. If there is a log jam at the elevator, you might decide to manoeuvre around the crowd and take the stairs. No problem there.

BEND IT LIKE A MANAGER

However, there is another kind of manipulation and manoeuvring that is a problem – when managers use their position to bend subordinates to their will.

While short-term gains may result, in the end the heart is taken out of people. Unfortunately, ingenuity in many organisations is eroded and just plain dissed. Where does this change happen?

LET’S START WITH THE BASICS.

It’s inspiring to have a new idea, to intuit a new way of getting the job done. People identify most with their ideas. “I think therefore, I am” is their motto. People feel good when they’re encouraged to originate and develop ideas. It gives their work meaning, makes it their own, and intrinsically motivates.

If the ideas are not their own, they say they want innovation. They receive new ideas as problems – especially if they are not their own. They are left with the idea originator’s problem, not the organisation’s problem. Before they feel discounted, disempowered and just plain dissed.

Although these words may carry a pejorative meaning, there is nothing inherently wrong with them. Indeed, into each life a little manipulation and manoeuvring must fall.

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WHERE DOES THIS EMPOWERMENT START?

First, by recognising that power is “the ability to do or act”. And second, by realising that power is intimately connected to ideas.

Most managers, unfortunately, perceive new ideas as problems – especially if the ideas are not their own. More often than not, managers don’t pay enough attention to the ideas of the people around them. They say they want innovation. They say they want “their people” to do something different.

But they do little to support their subordinates in their efforts to do so. More commonly, they foist their own ideas on others and can’t figure out why things aren’t happening faster.

THAT’S NOT HOW CHANGE HAPPENS

If people are only acting out somebody else’s ideas, it’s only a matter of time before they feel discounted, disempowered and just plain dissed.

People are more than hired hands; they are hired minds and hearts, as well.

IEDEATION

Let’s start with the basics. Everything you see around you began as an idea. The computer. The stapler. The paperclip, the microchip and the chocolate chip. All of these began as an idea within someone’s fevered imagination. The originators of these ideas were on fire. Did they have to be “managed”? No way.

In fact, if they had a manager, he or she would have done well to get out of the way. If you want to empower people, honour their ideas. Give them room to challenge the status quo. Give them room to move – and, by extension, move mountains.

Why? Because people identify most with their ideas.

“I think therefore, I am” is their motto. People feel good when they’re encouraged to originate and develop ideas. It gives their work meaning, makes it their own, and intrinsically motivates.

Who has the power in an organisation? The people who are allowed to think for themselves and then act on their ideas!

Who doesn’t have power? The people who have to continually check-in with others. Think about it. The arrival of a new idea is typically accompanied by a wonderful feeling of upliftment and excitement – even intoxication.

It’s inspiring to have a new idea, to intuit a new way of getting the job done. Not only does this new idea have the potential to bring value to the company, it temporarily frees the idea originator from their normal habits of thinking.

SIXTH SENSE AND MIND GAMES

A sixth sense takes over, releasing the individual from the gravity of status quo thinking.

In this mindset, the idea originator is transported to a more expansive realm of possibility. All bets are off. The sky is the limit. All assumptions are seen for what they are – limited beliefs with a history, but no future.

If you are a manager, you want people in this state of mind. It is not a problem. It is not the shirking of responsibility. It is not a waste of time.

On the contrary, it’s the first indicator that you are establishing a company culture that is conducive to innovation.

This is not to say, of course, that you have to fund every idea that comes your way.

On some level, ideas are a dime a dozen – and only a handful of them are ever going to amount to much. But if you treat all ideas as if they are worthless, you will never find the priceless ones.

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Creativity, you see, is often a numbers game. Einstein had plenty of bogus theories. Mozart wrote some rubbish. But they continued becoming prolific.

And it was precisely this self-generating spirit of creation, which enabled them to access the good stuff.

You, as a manager, want to increase the number of new ideas being pitched to you. You want to create an environment where new ideas are popping all the time.

If you do, old problems and ineffective ways of doing things will begin dissolving.

CREATIVE EMPOWERMENT

This is the hallmark of an innovative organisation – a place where everyone is encouraged and empowered to think creatively. Within this kind of environment, managers become coaches, not gatekeepers.

“Coaching”, of course, has been widely written about and there are many fine books on the subject. How to become an “innovation coach” – how to create the kind of environment that elicits the hidden genius of the people around you.

It’s one thing to tell people “you want their ideas”, it’s quite another to create the kind of environment that elicits the hidden genius of the people around you.
MANAGING YOUR BOSS

THIRTY-five years ago, John Gabarro and John Kotter suggested that we “manage our bosses”, and I realise this with a little chuckle as I was still in primary school and the majority of my colleagues today would not have been born when the book was first published.

It would have been invaluable to have read this back in the day, as the simple yet germane messages still apply. In light of present day workplace dynamics, let us re-emerge the advice put forth by Gabarro and Kotter.

MISREADING THE BOSS-SUBORDINATE RELATIONSHIP

The combination of having a good understanding of each other’s strengths, weaknesses, work styles and needs, and developing a healthy working relationship based on that mutual understanding, has been urgently found in highly effective managers.

Having had the opportunity to work in Gen-Y, Gen-X, and Gen-Z, and most recently lead a team comprising Gen-Z, Gen-X, and Gen-Y, this point is well taken.

While I tend to focus on an individual’s relationship within a team; observing, reading up and having a deeper understanding of the world that my team grew up in helps give some context to how they operate. Gen-Z, for example, may have developed their personalities in a world knowing that traditional choices like lifelong employment does not guarantee success. On millennials, the Deloitte Millennial Survey 2014 reports that they want to work for an organisation that not only fosters innovative thinking and develops their skills but also makes a positive contribution to society.

You may have felt the rusty reception of bosses to my endless ideas when joining a new role in my younger days, I seek to create an environment not nurseries creativity rather than quash it.

UNDERSTANDING THE BOSS

Virtual Teams

“Managing your boss requires that you gain an understanding of the boss and his or her context, as well as your own situation. All managers do this to some degree, but many are not thorough enough.” (Gabarro & Kotter)

Being part of a virtual team is increasingly common. On different occasions, I have been part of a widely dispersed team that certainly had its ups and downs.

Holding a presence in different countries, markets and cultures gave us access to valuable insights and helped avoid potential issues in project execution on the ground.

At the end of the day though, that human connection and just being in the same room to be able to read each other was crucial to develop the necessary understanding of our strengths, weaknesses, work styles and needs as well as the leadership style of the boss.

Failure to set it up right at the outset can lead to a dysfunctional team especially if the boss is unable to dial it back and progress through the stages of team development: forming, storming, norming, and performing.

While the years and in different organisational settings, I have seen how teams have evolved and it appears that team members appear to be more willing to assert themselves now – seeking clarification about the boss’s goals and what drives him/her rather than simply performing.

Step up and be heard!

UNDERSTANDING YOURSELF

Evergreen advice

At Leaderonomics, we recognise that self-awareness is a starting point for everyone seeking to develop themselves, be it the youth, college students, working adults or senior leadership of organisations.

This applies too to the working relationship with a boss.

Whether my relationship with my boss thrives in a virtuous cycle, or fizzes in a vicious cycle of interactions, it depends much on how I understand myself and my responses to my boss. And then working on developing an effective relationship for the former.

DEVELOPING AND MANAGING THE RELATIONSHIP

And now, action!

The Checklist for Managing your Boss (Harvard Business School) certainly applies today. To go from surviving to thriving at the workplace, we need to work on managing a relationship that fits the needs and styles of both boss and employee.

It should be based on clearly defined and mutual expectations of both, as well as dependability and honesty.

While we need to keep our bosses informed, bossed of today realise that to develop teams that are engaged and quick to adapt in changing environments, the flow of information has to go both ways.

Organisations that are rigid and hierarchical potentially miss out on opportunities that present themselves to everyone throughout the organisation – frontliners, for example, may have always wanted to suggest process improvements or hitherto untapped potential in markets but had no channel to do so.

For great insights from Azran Osman Rani, CEO of AirAsia X on developing an agile team and nurturing organisation-wide flows of information and ideas, do check out The Leaderonomics Show on www.leaderonomics.com.

Kareen was recently included in a focus group discussion representing Gen-X, where her investigator was appropriately amused (and confused) that Karen was clearly not the poster child for her generation. For more leadership content, do go to www.leaderonomics.com

IF YOUR HEAD IS ALWAYS FILLED WITH YOUR OWN THOUGHTS AND IDEAS, THERE WONT BE ANY ROOM LEFT TO ENTERTAIN THOSE OF OTHERS.

Creativity cannot be legislated. It cannot be sustained by pep talks. What needs to happen is that you, as a manager, take a deep breath, and begin to work.

Every encounter you have with another person in the workplace needs to be seen as an opportunity to seek to create an environment to nurture creativity rather than quash it.

Consider some of the following openers:

“Whatever sounds interesting. Can you tell me more?”

“What excites you the most about this idea?”

“What is the essence of your idea – the core principle?”

“How do you imagine your idea will benefit others?”

“In what ways does your idea fit with our strategic vision?”

“What information do you still need?”

“Who are your likely collaborators?”

“Is there anything similar to your idea on the market?”

“What support do you need from me?”

“What is your next step?”

Basicall, you want the idea originator to talk about their idea as much as possible in this moment of truth.

An idea needs to first take form in order to take root, and one of the best ways of doing this is to encourage the idea originator to talk about it – even if their idea is not yet fully developed.

SHARING IDEAS

The telling of the idea, in fact, is not unlike someone telling you their dream. The telling helps the dreamer flesh out the details of what they imagined and the subsequent hearing of it firmly installs it in their memory – and yours – so the idea does not fade quite as quickly.

Most of us, however, are so wrapped up in our own ideas that we rarely take the time to listen to others. Your subordinates know this and, consequently, rarely share their ideas with you.

But it doesn’t have to be this way. And it won’t necessarily require a lot of time on your part. Sometimes, yes. But not as much as you might think.

PARTING ADVICE

Bottom line, the time it takes you to listen to the ideas of others is not only worth it – the success of your enterprise depends on it.

Choose not to listen and you will end up frantically spending a lot more time down the road asking people for their ideas about how to save your business from imminent collapse.

By that time, however, it will be too late. Your workforce will have already tuned you out.

By KAREN NEON

karen.neoh@leaderonomics.com

mystarjob.com, saturday 31 January 2015

FROM PAGE 3

Having felt the frosty reception of bosses to my endless ideas when joining a new role in my younger days, I seek to create an environment not nurseries creativity rather than quash it.

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IF YOUR HEAD IS ALWAYS FILLED WITH YOUR OWN THOUGHTS AND IDEAS, THERE WONT BE ANY ROOM LEFT TO ENTERTAIN THOSE OF OTHERS.
We too often overcomplicate leadership and how to make it effective in our organisations. We end up with it being something about a few people at the top rather than something that everyone should be involved in day-to-day that inspires people to give their best no matter where they are or what they do.

As a result, we know that most organisations, teams and individuals could perform significantly better than they are currently. In many cases, having effective leaders could get 60% of people to give up to 30% more effort. So this is all about getting the best from you as an individual, your colleagues, your boss and all the other leaders in your organisation, including the chief executive officer!

What's clear is that delivering this success isn't complicated; we just think it is. It's actually based on things we all know about and have experienced. So we don't have to learn anything new to be able to make it happen.

This is the basis of my new approach to leadership – Mach 2 leadership (two simple steps to success) – in building effective, engaging, ethical and entrepreneurial leadership.

MACH 1 LEADERSHIP
The first step – Mach 1 – is to get people willing to give their best. For over 25 years, I have been asking people around the world what their best boss did daily. What made them give super performance for that person. The list of actions identified is consistent globally, across sectors and at different levels – from bankers in the United States to lawyers in the UK, the Red Cross and the Chinese Space Programme. There are simple practical things that make a real difference which can be done every day. However we often forget to do these. This is the simple but effective foundation for Mach 2 leadership.

MACH 2 LEADERSHIP
Mach 2 focuses all the extra effort delivered by Mach 1 on to things that really matter. To do this it helps leaders at all levels become more entrepreneurial by understanding the wider context of customer needs, the organisation and the world in which it operates. It makes clear that just understanding and doing your own job is no longer enough in the new world of organisations. Collaboration is key to success – now accounting for about 50% of profitability compared to just delivering your own objectives. So it's now more about "we" than "me".

The Mach 2 assessment is based on all of these areas to give you an idea of how you are doing across the board in a very quick, simple and practical way. It gives you an instant indication of things you are doing well and those that you can focus on to improve. This can then become part of your development plan for the forthcoming year. It has already been used successfully by leaders across the world from United States to Europe and Middle East to Asia.

Chris Roebuck (www.chrisroebuck.co) is visiting professor of transformational leadership at Cass Business School in London. He is a sought-after advisor and the developer of Mach 2 leadership – the combination of entrepreneurial, engaging, ethical and effective leadership. Follow him on Twitter @Chris__Roebuck. For more leadership content, visit www.leaderonomics.com

**ARE YOU THE BEST BOSS?**

**BE THE BEST ASSESSMENT**

**STEP BACK TO RE-EVALUATE**

After taking the Mach 2 questionnaire, here are some hard questions to ponder and ask yourself, before taking action on some of your leadership competencies that need improvement.

- Are you the first person to know what has happened to your team members, or are you usually the last to know?
- Do I know what motivates my team members in their work?
- Do I let my emotions run high, or do I usually respond calmly (but firm)?
- Are you communicating your expectations of the business clearly to your team?
- Am I actively seeking signs of high potentials in my team to develop them further?

Adapted from the online questionnaire
DECONSTRUCTING LEADERS

WHAT MAKES A GOOD AND BAD BOSS

By Roshan Thiran

We are a quote that goes something like this: “Good leadership implies, bad leaders control.” I am not sure if I agree fully with the quote. Some of my best bosses were inspiring yet controlling. They knew how to seamlessly move from authoritative to inspirational at just the right moment. So, what delineates good from great? Here is my take on it:

Many of us are frequently frustrated with our bosses. But does your unemployment equals to you having a bad boss? Some of my worst bosses (at least at the time) were also the best bosses for me. Does your experience with a bad boss if you keep chasing along and ship good work, people will know.

1) KNOW ME

All though my career at General Electric, I have taken on different roles and responsibilities on the 1" of many bosses. And they ensured that any role and assignment given to me was based on my strengths and weakness. They did not demand that I be a good boss. It was about me. It was about understanding and appreciating my strengths and weaknesses. It was about my role and assignment given to me was based on understanding my strengths and weaknesses. It was about my role and assignment given to me was based on understanding my strengths and weaknesses. It was about my role and assignment given to me was based on understanding my strengths and weaknesses.

Bill George in his book says, “The capacity to develop close and enduring relationships is a mark of the leader.”

And they ensured that any role and assignment given to me was based on my strengths and weaknesses.

2) FOCUS ME

Since bad bosses never really get to know you, they may never be able to focus you. All of us need to be focused.

Many of us are multi-talented. If I were to speak a five-minute conversation with my previous colleagues, I often would lead to my focused energy.

They asked me to do tasks and projects that I never would do it to discover. Instead, I ended up doing much that I did not want to do. This is the true measure of my performance, but I never took advantage of it. They were always willing to share information and knowledge and little habits of wisdom from time to time.

Some of the worst bosses I had were my best bosses.

We know that a good Ask, is that they often do not protect us and support us. They often curtail their own personal growth and development.

A number of years ago, I had to prepare a presentation that was delivered by our CEO to the group CEO, who was a feared man named Jack Welch.

3) CARE FOR ME

Many people mistakenly take care for employees as pampering them. The best bosses that I have had was being brutally honest.

A number of years ago, I had to prepare a presentation that was delivered by our CEO to the group CEO, who was a feared man named Jack Welch.

We know that a good Ask, is that they often do not protect us and support us. They often curtail their own personal growth and development.

4) GROW ME

The most influential part of great bosses and bad bosses is their willingness to grow you. Bad bosses don’t care so much about you.

The best bosses have had an impact (and not from themselves and others). They expect you to do more, more, more. You, want more and work much more. And they focus you on how to get there. And the journey to “more” is usually an overwhelming ambition.

Focus in on something that you are an expert in (or task) does have to be aligned with other parts of the organization.

The last differentiator between great bosses and bad bosses is their willingness to grow you. Bad bosses don’t care so much about you.

The difference between a good boss and a bad one is that...
Emotional Intelligence

When emotional intelligence first appeared to the masses, it served as the missing link in a peculiar finding: people with average IQs outperform those with the highest IQs 70% of the time. This anomaly threw a massive wrench into what many people had always assumed was the sole source of success—IQ.

Decades of research now point to emotional intelligence as the critical factor that sets star performers apart from the rest of the pack.

Emotional intelligence is the “something” in each of us that is a bit intangible. It affects how we manage behaviour, navigate social complexities, and make personal decisions that achieve positive results.

Emotional intelligence is made up of four core skills that pair up under two primary competencies: personal and social competence.

Social competence is made up of your awareness and relation management skills.

Social competence is your ability to understand other people’s moods, behaviour, and motives in order to respond effectively and improve the quality of your relationships.

Social Awareness is your ability to accurately perceive your emotions and stay aware of them as they happen.

Self-Management is your ability to use awareness of your emotions and the others’ emotions to manage interactions successfully.

Social competence comprises your self-awareness and self-management skills, which focus more on you individually than on your interactions with other people. Personal competence is your ability to stay aware of your emotions and manage your behaviour and tendencies.

Self-Awareness is your ability to accurately perceive your emotions and stay aware of them as they happen.

Self-Management is your ability to use awareness of your emotions to stay flexible and positively direct your behavior.

Social competence is made up of your social awareness and relationship management skills.

Social competence is your ability to understand other people’s moods, behaviour, and motives in order to respond effectively and improve the quality of your relationships.

Social Awareness is your ability to accurately pick up on emotions in other people and understand what is really going on.

Relationship Management is your ability to use awareness of your emotions and the others’ emotions to manage interactions successfully.

Emotional Intelligence, IQ, and Personality are Different

Emotional intelligence taps into a fundamental element of human behaviour that is distinct from your intellect.

There is no known connection between IQ and emotional intelligence; you simply can’t predict emotional intelligence based on how smart someone is.

Intelligence is your ability to learn, and it’s the same at age 15 as it is at age 50. Emotional intelligence, on the other hand, is a flexible set of skills that can be acquired and improved with practice. Although some people are naturally more emotionally intelligent than others, you can develop high emotional intelligence even if you aren’t born with it (see Graphic 3).

Personal competence comprises your self-awareness and self-management skills, which focus more on you individually than on your interactions with other people. Personal competence is your ability to stay aware of your emotions and manage your behaviour and tendencies.

Personality is the final piece of the puzzle. It’s the stable “style” that defines each of us. Personality is the result of hard-wired preferences, such as the inclination toward introversion or extroversion.

However, like IQ, personality can’t be used to predict emotional intelligence. Also like IQ, personality is stable over a lifetime and doesn’t change.

Emotional intelligence, and personality each cover unique ground and help to explain what makes a person tick.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE PREDICTS PERFORMANCE

How much of an impact does emotional intelligence have on your professional success? The short answer is: a lot! It’s a powerful way to focus your energy in one direction with a tremendous result.

TalentSmart tested emotional intelligence alongside 33 other important workplace skills, and found that emotional intelligence is the strongest predictor of performance, explaining a full 58% of success in all types of jobs.

Your emotional intelligence is the foundation for a host of critical skills—it impacts most everything you do and say each day (refer to Graphic 2).

If all the people we’ve studied at work, we’ve found that 90% of top performers are high in emotional intelligence. Personality is an essential part of the whole person.

On the flip side, just 20% of bottom performers are high in emotional intelligence. You can be a top performer without emotional intelligence, but the chances are slim.

Naturally, people with a high degree of emotional intelligence make more money—an average of US$29,000 more per year than people with a low degree of emotional intelligence.

The link between emotional intelligence and earnings is so direct that every point increase in emotional intelligence adds US$1,100 to an annual salary.

These findings hold true for people in all industries, at all levels, in every region of the world.

We haven’t yet been able to find a job in which performance and pay aren’t tied closely to emotional intelligence.

You can increase your emotional intelligence.

The communication between your emotional and rational “brains” is the physical source of emotional intelligence.

The pathway for emotional intelligence starts in the brain, at the spinal cord. Your primary senses enter here and must travel to the front of your brain before you can think rationally about your experience.

And just as your brain reinforces the use of new behaviours, the connections supporting old, destructive behaviours will die off as you learn to limit your use of them.
IN THE FACE OF CHANGE

CAN BossES Be IRRATIONAL?

By VICTOR S.L. TAN
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One of the reasons people resist change is fear. Many assume the worst of any change initiative in their companies.

HANGING ON TO FEARS WHICH ARE NOT REAL

A typical case in point is a client organisation, which was converting their information from physical files to digital in an online environment.

Many, especially the older workforce, worried that they could not learn new skills and adapt to the new technology.

This was proven untrue as with training, coaching and encouragement, all of them eventually learnt the new way of working and assimilated the new technology.

In essence, we noted that mindset is more important than skillset.

A study by IBM in 2008 on 1,500 change management executives from 15 countries showed that about 60% of projects fail to meet their objectives.

They pointed out that the major challenge in implementing successful change is changing the mindsets of people.

Change leaders must address concerns and people’s fear towards change. They need to focus on the mindset first before addressing the skillset.

Truly fear is depicted in the acronym: F.E.A.R. (False Evidence Appearing Real).

To implement successful change, leaders must first change the mindsets of people: convince them to let go of the old and fearlessly embrace the new.

ANALYSIS PARALYSIS

In my consulting work, I often run into leaders who love to do analysis. They come up with a complete SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis, risk analysis and change assessment impact.

They organise one meet-
When we think of successful people like Steve Jobs or Oprah Winfrey, we imagine an extremely hardworking person who sleeps four hours a day to accomplish 100 things per week. I lived like this for years. I was that guy who can’t say “no” to every task. I said “Yes, I will attend” to every meeting at work. I even said “yes” when a colleague invited me to try out Office Zumba (that didn’t work out for me, by the way). I also said “yes” to every friend who asked me to review their four-page resume (seriously folks, limit it to two pages please).

Saying “no” felt like I was passing up an opportunity knocking on my door, and so I always nodded my head. I was your “Yes, man!”

No, Man!
The downside was that I also exhausted and unhappened. Crossing out 10 tasks a day didn’t mean I achieved something that I really wanted, or needed. As I climbed the corporate ladder, I realised that feeling productive is different from being productive. This was the time in my life when I knew that I had to start saying “I’m sorry, but no.”

Business icons like Sir Richard Branson and Bill Gates attest to one powerful philosophy behind their success: focus on one big thing, be good at it, and say “no” to other unnecessary opportunities. For every mountain they climbed, stood a dozen of opportunities they also declined.

When Steve Jobs commented on what was his one proud achievement in Apple, he said, “I am as proud of what we don’t do, as I am with what we do. Deciding what not to do is as important as deciding what to do.”

But why do you say “no” to meetings that you don’t think are important? How do you turn down a friend who has been inviting you to run some laps at 4am? Here are some insights on the power of saying “no,” and some tips on how to graciously decline.

1. Do What Doctors Do: Triage
I spend a decent time of my childhood in hospitals because my mom is a nurse. Every New Year’s eve, my mom got assigned in the emergency room and left me at the waiting area until her shift ended.

Past dinner time, I would see many blood-stained people rushing for medical help. Some had lost a finger, others a limb. What struck me was that not every patient received care immediately.

“Triage,” my mom answered. “We practise triage when doctors and medical equipment cannot manage too many patients.”

You may have seen triage showcased in movies about wars, accidents, and calamities. Those severely wounded, but can survive if treated are given first priority, while those who have no chance of surviving all will unfortunately be attended to later.

I apply triage in life, because life is a battlefield. Every day we are bombarded with hundreds of stimuli that fight for our attention: a favour asked by a friend, a funny video on Facebook, a new deadline set by your boss, or that new cute office-mate of yours.

They individually take a few minutes of our day, but can total to hours of consumed time.

While my initial reaction was to respond to everything, I now only choose the ones that will significantly impact my life: what will develop me as a person, what will make me sleep better at night, and what will make more people happy.

Similarly, leaders don’t do all the tasks; they delegate these to their team. The rest will be thrown in the bin with no regrets. Just like triage, letting go is painful but necessary so you can move on.

2. Remember That Every “No” Earns You a “Yes” for Something Else
In 1993, an employee of Delta Airlines thought that passengers didn’t really mind (nor did they eat) the lettuce on their entree that served as base for salad. He suggested taking it out, which of course irritated the guys in the kitchen (“But we’ve been doing it like this for years!”). The management followed his suggestion. To their surprise, not only did some passengers think that the entree looked cleaner; some didn’t even notice the removal at all. Voila! Weeding out the lettuce saved them a whopping US$1.4mil in output on this other project.

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3. The Jack-of-All-Trades is Dead in the 21st Century
Whenever my boss assigns me with an extra workload, I manage my expectations about my performance because lesser focus means weaker performance.

“You are not a washing machine that can clean with the same power even if you add just a few more shirts or towels. So, it is alright to say “no”.

I remember the award-winning Japanese documentary, Jiro Dreams of Sushi which demonstrates how the master always defeats the jack-of-all-trades.

Jiro is an 85-year-old sushi maker who owns the most expensive sushi restaurant in the world. When asked by his customers to also serve okonomiyaki or tempura, he politely declines.

His strength is making sushi, and trying to be good at another dish will only weaken the expertise of his cooks and waiters. It will also only increase his costs of operation.

Don’t try to be everything in people’s minds. Similarly, don’t try to please everyone at work. Ignore the rest, and focus your energy on things that will impact your development.

Here’s your next challenge
Saying no is a conscious, rational strategy in life. There is no right or wrong prioritisation, but your decision will determine your success.

You have the right to say “no”, when you think you can’t or should not do it.

But don’t just say no; be gracious to give your reason as well. Most of the time, people will understand it as it is.

Now, I challenge you with one thing: look at your to-do list today and focus on only one or two things that really matter. As for the rest, try singing with me — “Let it go... let it go”...

Jonathan Yabut is the winner of The Apprentice Asia, and is currently based in Kuala Lumpur with a leading airline. He also engages in motivational talks about youth and leadership across South-East Asia. Jonathan recently launched his book, From Grit to Great, which recalls his inspiring journey in winning the show. Follow him on Twitter @JonathanYabut.

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**By EIBHLIN LIM**

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Today’s top industry leaders arrived at the top much earlier than those from decades ago. An obvious example: Mark Zuckerberg. At 31, the Facebook chief executive officer (CEO) has a net worth of US$28.36bil (as evaluated in 2014) and has been constantly featured on the most influential/powerful lists around the world.

In comparison, most people, only two decades ago, climbed onto the C-suite career stage in their late 40s or 50s. Because individuals who grew up in this generation and in the Zuckeberg era still work frequently together (as bosses and staff, business partners, and clients), I was curious to take a look at the relationship dynamics.

As such, I have talked with young leaders of various Malaysian organisations, from the government to for-profit and to start-ups as well as social enterprises, to learn more about their working relationships.

**SMART YET HUMBLE**

Many people believe that youths today have a strong sense of self-entitlement. I have heard of a teacher who had to have a strong sense of self-entitlement. I believe that today expect to receive something.

Thus, it comes as no surprise

I find that the
tiignant, most people often associate the

I do not know this but

In response, she says: “I don’t feel self-conscious about my age.”

One should not feel self-conscious about their age if they are qualified and have the skills for the particular task.

I believe that a youth leader would be able to gain the respect of others through maturity and by acting in a grounded and humble way. Some youths talk big but do not know a lot or even, anything at all.

“When I do not know something, I say, I do not know this but let me find out. I find that the combination of this humbled attitude and having knowledge in the field, changes a lot of people’s perception for the better,” she shares.

Meanwhile, Warren Chan, 25, the managing director of Social Enterprise Alliance, Malaysia believes that being humble and sincere is the key to changing the baby boomer’s negative perception of today’s young business leaders and gaining their support.

Through his experiences in careers that range from corporate, social enterprise to government, he has learned that being humble and asking elders for advice is very important.

“Most of them are happy to share their thoughts and opinions on things with you, especially if you have a good relationship with them,” he says.

“Also, I found that most people are willing to help you in any way they can, especially if you are doing something good for others. All you need to do is to be sincere, share about what you are doing and be willing to ask for help when you need it,” he adds.

**LISTEN, BE PATIENT**

Besides being self-entitled and arrogant, most people often associate the negative generation with being rude, impatient and stubborn.

These are not exactly the traits one would often associate with someone who is a good listener or who has great empathy skills.

Teoh Wee Kiat, 26, co-founder of myBurgerLab, Malaysia, finds that he is sometimes better at connecting with people who are significantly older than him than those who are in his age group.

Teoh, who interacts daily with customers who are often twice his age, believes that the secret to earning the trust and respect of an older person is being a good listener.

“Sometimes they might be unhappy about something but that is really not the biggest issue that is bothering them. Maybe all they want is to be known that they are heard and to be comforted. Listening skills is something you develop over time but it is really important to know what people are actually saying at the end of the day,” he says.

**YOUNG LEADERS OF TODAY**

Taking on a leadership position at a company can be quite daunting, especially if most of your team members or stakeholders are significantly older than you. Understandably, they might not hold the same culture, values or beliefs as you do. Additionally, they might even have a negative perception about what your generation represents.

That said, this does not mean that you should give up on the opportunity to take on a leadership role or stop chasing your dreams to be a leader entirely. As the young leaders of various organisations in Malaysia have proven, it is possible for someone who is in his/her 20s or 30s to head a department or even an organisation.

Done right, you could also help change some of the negative perceptions most people have about the younger generation as a whole.

Eibhlin Lim is a 19-year-old student-entrepreneur who is passionate about solving problems. To share your thoughts with her, or to engage with us on youth development, email us at editor@leaderonomics.com. For more Young articles, visit www.leaderonomics.com.
By ELISA DASS AVIN
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MALAYSIANS are an interesting lot. In the past years, we have witnessed a few political campaigns that successfully rallied an army of Malaysians who stood up for what they believed in, and openly disagreed with what they believed to be wrong.

In fact we all personally know at least a handful of protesters, if not more in the crowd. Or perhaps, we were in the crowd. It truly is a great feeling of unity, knowing we are more courageous to take a stand publicly with large groups (or behind the firewall of Facebook) than to voice our opinions alone, even if it is in a less drastic situation at the workplace, or all the way up to the chairman of the company.

What’s different this time is that it may seem as though your hands are tied and you are marked guilty for the bad decisions made, simply by association. So, what if you are asked to carry out a task that you disagree with? How do you deal with it?

The textbook advice is of course to ask you to just take orders, or get another job! But let’s look at some scenarios and see how we can go beyond the normal reactions.

1. **YOU AND YOUR BOSS HAVE DIFFERING PERSPECTIVES/VALUES**
   - If your boss believes in hiring externally instead of promoting internally, then it is a matter of weighing the pros and cons.
   - There is no need to go head-on just yet with a debate. Instead, tactfully present the pros and cons of each option. Subtly cite examples without sounding condescending. I see no reason to leaving the company just yet.
   - While you stay on and try to influence your boss, be open minded to see the pros and cons of his/her preferred approach.
   - However, if it is a matter of differing values and your boss’ approach seems to harm others, then try to firmly understand his/her beliefs before explaining why it is not benefiting others.

2. **AN OBVIOUS BAD JUDGMENT**
   - You can almost predict the outcome of the decision but your boss just doesn’t or won’t see it. In cases like this, no convincing will do much help.
   - Instead, strike a friendly deal with your boss that if the outcome is as bad as you predicted, the next time this scenario arises, you get to make the call.
   - That is, if it is not a crucial decision that can be reversed.

3. **DIRECTIVES FROM THE BOARD OR HIGHER AUTHORITIES**
   - Many times, direct decision makers are surprised when orders come from the highest level in the office.
   - In cases like these, impact of decisions from the board can either be drastic or insignificant.
   - If many of your colleagues do not agree with the board as well, gather a group and cordially ask one of the decision makers to better understand the justification behind it.
   - If you and your group of colleagues still strongly disagree, then it should be made known with good justifications as well.
   - Ask for an explanation from the board. Until then, if you don’t receive a satisfying response, then re-consider if this is the company that you still wish to work for.

**PARTING ADVICE**
- Change and demands of change seem to give a negative connotation at times like this in Malaysia.
- However, at your workplace, it doesn’t need to result in a protest. You can request for reasonable explanation for what you disagree with.
- I would like to believe that there are some bosses and board of directors who would respond sufficiently if we would ask politely using our magic words – “please” and “thank you”!

**THE OFFICE SCENARIO**
- It is not uncommon to find employees who disagree with their bosses but proceed to carry out work nonetheless.
- Let’s explore a little more on the mis-alignment of ideas and values between you and your superiors – your manager or all the way up to the chairman of the company.
- What’s different this time is that it may seem as though your hands are tied and you are marked guilty for the bad decisions made, simply by association.

**THE sweet spot**
- Ask for an explanation from the board. If you don’t receive a satisfying response, then re-consider if this is the company that you still wish to work for.
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**Set your goals and move forward**
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