KAREN SAYS...

SITTING at the newspaper having a last look at the pages before we send them merely on the next step in the process of bringing you our weekly labour of love, I seem to be inundated with calls and emails this week. There are people we seem to connect with immediately, making communication effortless. And then there is the entire spectrum of people who require varying levels of blood, sweat and tears to get a message across. Adds to the colour of life, doesn’t it?

As both Morag Barrett and Richard Newton point out, the ability to develop better connections in our professional lives is important, and is equally applicable in our lives outside work. Barrett cautions us on actions we might want to avoid, providing action plans to counter each bad habit, while Newton shares seven simple steps on how to connect with others better.

Joseph Tan takes a step back to consider the things which may threaten the establishment of good relationships, then urges us to take the time to listen, think and invest in the people around us.

Connections can be made at different levels – where good communication skills tend to lie at the core. Majura Perashot, truly walks the walk (or in this case, talks the talk) – as I have seen her in action communicating with ease in the many interactions she has.

This brings us to the article by Jonathan Yabut on how to love the boss you dislike? Trying to develop a good working relationship with anyone who is disagreeable is dicey in itself – if that person happens to be the boss, working relationship with anyone who is disagreeable is dicey in itself – if that person happens to be the boss, one might imagine much walking on eggshells. Yabut presents a good case as to why we should choose to “love our bosses” and how we might do it.

You can say that the leader we feature in The Leaderonomics Show made a different connection – making a change and connecting the dots that led him down a very different path in his career and life. Khirnir Koodry uncovers the story behind a lawyer turned PR man.

In our Starting Young column, Stephanie Kee shares with us her thought process in finding the right role model. And finally in Movie Wisdom, Kathleen Tan shares the leadership lessons she learnt from the movie Kingsman: The Secret Service.

Have a fantastic weekend!

KAREN NEOH
Editor
leaderonomics.com

THE MISSING LINK IN COMMUNICATION

By TARA THIAGARAJAN

SINCE the dawn of time, language has been used as a mode of communication between the likes of Neanderthals to Shakespeare, a fact which also illustrates the vast differences in language skills amongst humans.

As for myself, I find that I frequently oscillate within the spectrum of societal language conventions. Therefore, the meaning behind my chatter has often been misconstrued by some, but understood by others.

This has led me to believe that my language skills have been shaped over the years into a vague, mildly confusing verbal expression of my ever-wandering thoughts. All these facts lead me to believe that I am a less-than-adequate communicator when it comes to determining how I should speak depending on where I am.

AN AWKWARD MOMENT

To illustrate this point, let us journey into my very embarrassing past, when I was at the tender age of 15. During this time in my life, I was transferred to a new school and thus, was exposed to many new faces I had to interact with.

Due to the inherent human tendency of not wanting to be shunned by peers, I attempted to socialise by adopting the preferred acquired linguistic styling known as Ebonics, or commonly known as African American or “ghetto” slang.

Footloose though I thought my plan was, my ship soon sank and I attempted to sail into the vast unknown sea of social interaction. As soon as I embarked, the mysterious waters began seeping into the crevasses of my “ghetto” vessel, flooding my ship with question marks and confused expressions.

As my greeting of “Yo, what up homie skillett biscuit?” fell on confused and mildly terrified ears, it was then I realised that nearly all of my classmates primarily spoke Chinese and were not as familiar as I was in the stylings of popular hip-hop artists such as Lil Wayne and Jay-Z.

To continue this maritime metaphor, I jumped ship and swam to the shores of “Manglish”. I was then I realised that nearly all of my classmates primarily spoke Chinese and were not as familiar as I was in the stylings of popular hip-hop artists such as Lil Wayne and Jay-Z.

THE TAKE-HOME MESSAGE

As a consequence of this slightly dramatised anecdote, I learned that it is important to adjust the way I speak depending on the situation in which I find myself. My mind many individuals struggle with as well.

Admitting your weakness is the first step to improving yourself and I think I have effectively taken that step. Together, let us all be aware of our environment to ensure that effective communication takes place. Onwards and upwards, my comrades in communication!

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

By Joseph Tan
joseph.tan@leaderonomics.com

“I am a rock, I am an island” — Paul Simon.

If independence and freedom are the hallmarks of a liberated individual, why then is there still a need to connect with another person? Or maybe there might not be a need to connect after all — as I am writing this article, I admit that I do not know everyone who is living on the same street as I do. Why is that?

Because I have everything that I need in my home, there is really no need for me to reach out to my neighbours (unless I need to borrow something).

Here’s the irony — because I live in a connected world (digitally), there is less of a need for me to connect (physically). There could be those who are more comfortable with Facebook rather than face-look!

The failure to connect stems from our success in the following three areas:

The Success of Digital Pervasiveness

The ease with which we can digitally connect in today’s technology-laden world is both a blessing and a curse. The curse is that of superficiality and anonymity.

Back in the days of face-to-face interactions, there was a lot more care taken in choosing and crafting the words that we speak because communication involves our body language, tone of voice, eye contact and other mannerisms.

However, much of these personal elements are now filtered by the screen and the keyboard. In other words, the value of personal connection has been diluted by the ease of digital connection.

From the perspective of human nature, when we put effort into something, we value it. If digital connection is so pervasive and cheaply available, it now requires very little effort to communicate — I can type and also disguise my intentions behind the safety and comfort of my five-inch smartphone screen without having to worry about the tone of my voice or the non-verbal part of the communication process.

If non-verbal cues form more than 50% of my communication impact, then we may have missed out on the value of real connection if the digital portion begins to drown out the physical face-to-face factors.

The Success of High Productivity

In my consulting assignments with organisational leaders, they are often caught in a “performance paradox” — how do I get my employees to perform at a higher level and yet enjoy their job at the same time?

Much of what creates high performance today is also a significant source of stress and frustration.

Hence, employees end up being performance-driven but have something missing in terms of organisation culture. In other words, the role has overcrowded the soul.

The failure to connect in this sense is captured in the following phrase — most unresolved conflicts stem from unresolved conversations.

Sometimes, we need to recapture once again the simplicity of having regular conversations rather than just pushing communication.

Productivity becomes dry and clinical when employees just communicate with each other without the effort to converse.

Instead of just focusing on getting things done, are we mindful of getting things done in a persuasive and motivating manner?

If higher productivity is the single most absorbing goal, the pleasures of conversation are then sacrificed on the altar of quick results.

However, if organisations are striving towards sustainable performance, then we need to realise that culture is built one conversation at a time.

The Success of Instant Gratification

We live in an “instant-on” environment. We want answers, and we want them now. In fact, my friend in Gallup recently mentioned that on average, a person looks at his or her smartphone 67 times a day.

We are constantly on the lookout for replied messages. Anything that comes back to me the next day is considered unacceptable — just because I press the “send” button, I would expect you to read it immediately and take action quickly.

Now, this is acceptable in the case of certain team situations which require the dynamics of fast response, but if this becomes the interaction habit we impose on others, then we may risk creating a mis-understanding or conflict.

This “give-it-to-me-now” culture works against a fundamental principle of effective communication — understanding another human being takes time.

When we have a utilitarian mentality towards relationships, then the interaction becomes transactional rather than transformational.

The failure to connect happens when we look for short-cuts in reaching out to another person, not realising that the complexities of emotions and the individual personality requires a lot of understanding and hard work. Without the commitment to connect, there can be no fruits of loyalty and faithfulness.

What can we do to stem the tide of “communication success” so that we are mindful of the failure to connect on a personal level?

Here are three personal “connecting habits” for your consideration.

Connecting Habit No. 1: Take Time to Listen (Not Just to Hear)

When connecting with someone, avoid the habit of constantly thinking of what to say next. Instead, learn to ask open-ended questions that invite the sharing of emotions and deeper perspectives.

Seeking first to understand through active listening is a sure way to reach a person’s heart. I beg to differ with the axiom stating that the best way to a man’s heart is through his stomach — I would venture to say that the best way to anyone’s heart is through your ears.

Connecting Habit No. 2: Take Time to Think (Not Just to Talk)

We live in a “noisy” culture. Most restaurants are filled with noise — there is plenty of chatter and even if nobody is talking, there is the towering presence of TV screens hanging from almost every corner of the ceiling!

Shopping centres are filled with loud, intrusive music. There is so much noise that sometimes, I can’t hear myself think.

So, the next time you want to connect with someone, look for a quiet place — perhaps even taking a walk in the park so that as you connect, you also have time to reflect and think. A lot of what needs to be said can be more impactful if we cultivate the habit of regular reflection and control of what we want to say through the filters of wisdom.

Connecting Habit No. 3: Take Time to Invest (Not Just to Impose)

At the heart of every successful connection is an attitude of giving — being blessed more by giving than receiving. If I approach every conversation with the mindset of “What can I invest into this person’s life?” rather than “What can I get out of this relationship?” then the whole interaction takes a new, refreshing dimension.

In other words, you will end up being an energy-giver rather an energy-taker. Consider the other person’s needs, preferences and challenges in life — “What can I do to help him to become better...?”

As you can see, all of the above “connecting habits” take up the most precious commodity we all have — TIME. The challenge is this — how would you spend it? To merely communicate or to meaningfully connect?

Joseph Tan is the CEO of Leaderonomics Centre of Engagement Excellence. He is passionate about ensuring all Malaysian employees are fully-engaged in their work and with their organisations. If you would like to enhance the engagement levels at your organisation, email joseph.tan@leaderonomics.com for more details.
BE UNDERSTOOD

HOW OFTEN DO WE HEAR SUCH COMMENTS BEING MADE? AND HOW FREQUENTLY HAS THIS LED TO MORE PROBLEMS WITH YOUR CO-WORKERS OR PEOPLE AROUND YOU?

Miscommunication happens when people fail to check whether the message that they are sending is clearly understood. As people grow and depend heavily on communication through electronic devices, the art of face-to-face communication is also slowly diminishing. The following are some of the finer things to look for in your next conversation:

PAY ATTENTION
Many of us are just too busy trying to respond to e-mails or text messages that we tend to focus on our screen thinking that we can multi-task when people come to have a chat. This is not only disrespectful, it also tends to create miscommunication.

The human brain is wired to only store five to seven things at any one time and trying to respond to mail while discussing important details may cause you to lose significant data. You might also lose your approachability.

As the old saying goes, “actions speak louder than words”. If you are engaged in a conversation while facing your screen, you may unknowingly send the wrong message to the other party. To avoid such things from happening, all you need to do is put your phone on silent and shift your chair to face the person who is communicating with you.

Pay attention to your body language. Make sure that there is eye-contact and your body is open. This way, you will not only be able to pay full attention to the person, you will also be telling them that they matter.

DO NOT ASSUME
Avoid assuming you know everything the communicator has in mind. Generally, we tend to assume that people, especially our colleagues, know exactly what to do after sharing with them a general idea of a situation.

No matter how obvious you may think the solution or action is, always clarify with the person you are talking to about their understanding of the message that you are sending. It may appear to you that this requires a lot of time. However, it is always better to state the obvious than to deal with the problems that may arise due to any miscommunication.

While optimism is an excellent trait to have, avoid being overly optimistic about our peers’ ability to understand our messages.

DO NOT INTERRUPT
Again, respect plays a huge role in communication. Always be humble and respect others by listening to what they have to say and not finishing their sentences for them.

By allowing people to finish their sentences, you will be able to gather the whole picture before proceeding with asking the right questions in order to better understand the message.

Encourage the person you are engaging with by asking more questions and listening attentively when they speak. This will not only allow people to be more open in sharing their ideas with you, they will also feel appreciated and respected.

DO NOT FORGET TO PLAN
Planning for a conversation will not only save you time. It will also ensure that you do not miss any of the issues to be discussed.

Planning ahead allows you to see the flow of the conversation and helps the person with whom you are communicating see a clearer picture of the problems or issues that you are working on as a team.

A conversation is similar to telling a story. You need to have an introduction, a main body and a conclusion to help your audience understand the content of the message.

By sharing a broader context about a certain topic of discussion, you are not only allowing others to see why they are doing a certain task, you are also allowing them to share their point of view on the matter.

You never know what you are missing unless you have someone pointing it out from a different perspective.

DON’T FORGET TO SUMMARISE
This element is not only important in presentations, it is also crucial in our daily conversations especially if the conversations that we are having involve certain action plans.

Having a communication recap or summary helps in ensuring that you understand fully what the communicator wanted to say and that the intended message is received.

Summarising is more than reciting what was told to you; it involves analysing information and discerning significant information.

When you, or the person with whom you are communicating, are able to summarise the points in the conversation, you can be certain that the message being communicated is understood and therefore ready to be delivered.
The sheer number of visitors crossing the threshold broke previous records and was indicative of the manner in which Gen-Y jobseekers, savvy young men and women with brains and attitude, are no longer clicking distractedly in virtual hideouts, but are throwing themselves out in the real world and actively meeting recruiters.

Despite the positive signs, a number of recruiters were left feeling tickled. During preliminary interviews, many noted that the Gen-Y crowd, while very connected and fast in problem-solving, were overly confident and preferred to “wing it.”

One of the biggest problems appeared to be a lack of focus. Applicants had to work on multiple leads.

For the unprepared, this was very distracting since there were 116 participating graduate recruiters at the fair with so many diverse roles on the table. So, if you are as a jobseeker who is willing to go the extra mile for career opportunities, what can you do to be one of the chosen?

 Needless to say, you should do more than show up with an armload of resumes, praying and spraying.

WIN PEOPLE OVER

As a member of the exhibitor team, I was privy to the going-on at the fair. Based on what I observed, I feel there are a few things that jobseekers can do to improve their chances of getting shortlisted, and hopefully get picked for a follow-up interview.

1. DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Understand that the interview is not about you!

The interviewer doesn’t really care about your practised answers to the strengths/weaknesses question, your grades or your clean driving licence record.

A good interviewer cares only about one thing — the company.

The questions you are asked are meant to see if you are a good fit for its work culture. Preparation is key. At a minimum, you should have read the company’s brochures or visited its website.

Review the job posting, and try to understand what it requires. Once you have solid information about the company at your fingertips, you will come across as a potential partner who can join the company and hit the ground running.

2. PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR BODY LANGUAGE

Try not to appear nervous or needy. Job-hunting is a bit like dating — no one is going to ask you out if you look like you are falling to pieces.

Be prepared to handle yourself in a calm and professional manner, especially under a barrage of questions. A good way to improve the way you conduct yourself is to do practice interviews.

The second time you tell a story will always be better than the first, even though your answers are essentially the same.

Listen carefully and answer precisely. If you don’t know what to do with your hands, put them in your pockets.

3. BE MINDFUL OF YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA

Recruiters today are savvy; they look beyond carefully crafted resumes.

They prefer to understand you better by checking out the stuff you do when you think no one is looking.

Thanks to social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and even LinkedIn, there’s a whole lot of honest information about you out there, which you have created yourself.

It is known that colleges and universities take into account the visibility of a person’s social media opinions when filtering new student applications. Now, employers are joining the game.

What you have put on the world wide web is open to interpretation. To you, it might all be done in the spirit of playful expression; but to others, it may show elements of undesirability both as a co-worker and a potential HR investment.

4. ASK QUESTIONS

People overestimate what they can do in a day and underestimate what they can do in their whole lives. Don’t be afraid to ask about the company’s values and what you would be doing if you get the job.

After all, job-hunting is more than just selling yourself.

You will need to learn the art of listening and asking the right questions. This could be the partnership you want, or not.

Have two or three questions ready, so you show you are passionate about joining the team. Asking questions also show that you are inquisitive, and sharp.

If flexible work hours are important to you, but you fear sounding like a wimp, ask the interviewer what the office looks like at 8pm. The point is, you can find out a lot just by interviewing the interviewer.

CONCLUSION

The word out there is yes, the big companies are hiring; they are also actively taking steps to attract, engage and retain talent.

As a matter of fact, we are seeing it now — in the way organisations in banking, finance, oil and gas, and property development are slowly evolving and improving on their employee value propositions.

Meeting a representative of the company is a good chance to give and get feedback. Things to remember (before, after and during any face-to-face encounter) is to try to relax and be yourself.

However badly you want the job, always remember to stay in your own skin and be thankful for people’s time.

By NINA TI

nina@leaderonomics.com

The Mega Career and Studies Fair 2015, organised by GTI Media on Feb 7-8, was a highly anticipated event for jobseekers and prospective postgraduate students.

This time around, it was a huge industry accomplishment and a monumental affair as the two-day event managed to gather 60% of Malaysia’s 100 Leading Graduate Employers under one roof.

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However badly you want the job, always remember to stay in your own skin and be thankful for people’s time.
DOING happens in our subconscious. Having learning, interacting, playing or working we get this right, we form strong connections. We do this as soon as we are born. When we
communicate through words, body language, tones, actions and behaviours we are doing this.
The challenge we face is that communicating does not always work as intended. Our communications can be a big problem.
I am sure everyone reading this has experienced a time when a friend or loved one said or done something that you have misunderstood something we have
said or done.

Be conscious

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We respond in different ways to different people. Think about the specific person you want to connect with. What is the background context to your connection? Is this person's role relative to yours? Do they have an existing relationship with the person you are trying to connect to? What type of communications does the person you are trying to connect to prefer?

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Ways to Love the Boss You Dislike

By Jonathan Yabut

0, you’ve landed your dream job. You love your work and you have colleagues who make you laugh. Everything seems to be perfect except for one thing — you hate your boss. The boss micromanages you as he (or she) checks your time-in and time-out. Your superior takes things personally when you don’t use the font size he (or she) prescribes for presentations. Sound familiar? The success of your career should never be hindered by a boss you never asked for. But you need to put up with your superior while you work under him (or her). It is easier said than done: how can you get along with someone you’d rather push away?

In the spirit of love last month (and with Chinese Valentine’s Day, or Chap Goh Mei a few days ago), here are some tips on how to love the boss you dislike.

1. Know Your Boss Well
Your company has a good reason for investing in team-building sessions: personal bonds promote professional trust. Have you personally bonded with your boss lately? Don’t be one of those who doesn’t know the boss because they put him (or her) on a pedestal. Maybe your boss’s temper is mistaken for passion for work? Maybe your superior is an introvert and prefers people to approach him (or her) instead? Spend more time with your boss and take cues if he (or she) is open to eating lunch with you or going out for drinks after work. Forming those personal bonds will enable the both of you to be compassionate (or should I say, forgiving) with each other at work. The more you know your boss, the more predictable and manageable he (or she) will be.

2. Find One Genuine Reason to Like Your Boss, and Focus on It
I once had a colleague with whom I disliked because she believed in using shortcuts that compromised output quality. This experience should be no different with your boss. Some bosses may be bad managers (maybe they lack leadership experience), but that doesn’t mean that they’re bad people. In most cases, there is always one redeeming factor that can enrich your way towards liking a person. Focus on that one small thing, cultivate it, and leverage on it until you finally get to accept your boss despite the things you dislike him/her for.

3. Look at Yourself in the Mirror
Have you ever considered that the problem may be you, and not your boss? It’s easier to change yourself than someone else, so altering your mindset might just do the trick.

Try asking yourself these questions:
1. Am I irritated by my boss because he (or she) reminds me of someone I don’t like? Go out to eat lunch with him or her, and stay silent.
2. Am I associating my boss with a group of people I frowned upon? (Is he or she representing a religion, philosophy, or lifestyle that I feel uncomfortable with?)
3. Am I concerned that I might end up like my boss?

4. Believe That a Bad Boss Can Change You for Good
When you can’t find any reason to respect my boss, I always fall back to the most practical reminder: a bad boss can always get the best out of you.

Your boss will test your patience. He (or she) will drive you nuts with the most impossible deadlines. But remember — what doesn’t kill you only makes you stronger. A year with a bad boss will sharpen you with improved social skills in dealing with hard-headed people and self-awareness that will propel your emotional intelligence.

These soft skills are indispensable especially when you decide to move to a new organisation. Learn to love a bad boss for he (or she) has demonstrated to you what bad leadership is. Indeed, people only realise the things that they like after experiencing the things they dislike.

List down the lessons you can gather from your bad boss. Love your boss for these if you can’t love that person for who he (or she) is.

5. Be Brave and Speak Up
The riskiest solution is to share your thoughts and feelings with your boss. Opening up and telling your superior that your relationship is not on the path for you, not dictate it. A bad one will probably not care about what you think, and may even perceive you as challenging his or her authority for speaking up.

Defining these lines will help the both of you understand when not to push each other’s buttons, and help minimise friction. A good boss will constantly solicit feedback from you if he (or she) has been a coach or mentor. Your superior will clear the path for you, not dictate it. A bad one will probably not care about what you think, and may even perceive you as challenging his or her authority for speaking up.

When All Things Fail
The passive solution is to outlast a boss who is expected to leave, or be moved to a different team, or be fired. If you are happy with your company but not with your boss, waiting may be a good option.

You can also escalate the matter to a higher authority if the issue cannot be handled back any more. Talk to your human resources business partner or to the boss of your boss.

If your colleagues share the same concerns about your boss, invite them to back you up.

Concluding Thoughts
The worst case is to ignore the problem and stay silent. Only those who speak up or seek help will get what they need or want.

After all, it always takes two to tango, and dealing with your boss should never be a one-way street. May you soon spread the love!
I travel regularly for business and on each trip I am surrounded by hundreds of people. On the plane, in the airport, at my destination. I love the anonymity, and yet I hate it.

Travel has the ability to bring us close to others while remaining invisible, alone. All those people, yet no one to talk to. Connected, yet disconnected.


With the introduction of technology, we have the ability to connect with hundreds, even thousands of people. Whether it’s connections, friends, or even likes and tweets.

Yet despite being so connected, I continue to hear the same story: “I have (insert your own number) Facebook friends, but I have no one I can turn to in an emergency.”

SOCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

It’s not just social relationships that matter, but professional ones too.

A recent study by the Association of Accounting Technicians of 2,000 employees reported that within the top 10 reasons for staying with a company, “relationships” appeared three times.

So forget “location, location, location”. Instead, the mantra should be “relationships, relationships, relationships.”

Think about it for a moment (especially if you are involved in any sort of employee engagement project), people don’t look forward to going to work because of the work. They look forward to going to work because of the people they work with, the relationships they have, and the experience of being connected to someone and something.

PERSONAL AND BUSINESS IMPERATIVE

Cultivating winning relationships is not just a business imperative, it’s a personal one as well. You can’t deliver your results through your own efforts, at least not in the long term, unless you’re willing to risk being stressed and burning out.

Work is the biggest team sport any of us get to play. It’s all about the connections, the relationships, not just to get stuff done, but to have fun, inspire, create, innovate, and support customers and each other in delivering a powerful experience.

In my experience with successful companies; teams; individuals, those that don’t just survive, but thrive and grow in the longer term, do so because they don’t simply focus on the ‘what’ of their business. They also spend much time and effort nurturing the how’s, the organizational culture, interpersonal relationships between individual employees and teams that transform results.

AVOID THESE, PLEASE!

Here are three scenarios that prevent relationships from being formed and/or strengthened:

1. The endless meetings where employees run from one to another.
   This is where we get “straight down to business” and don’t take the time to learn about the people around the table. Their experiences, their previous roles and the things that we have in common. Nuggets of information that can bring us closer together, allow us to contribute at our best, to connect.

   **Action plan:** The next time you are hosting a meeting, take a few moments to allow people to learn about each other, their expertise, how they got to where they are today. I guarantee it will build connections that will ensure a more effective team.

2. Eating alone.
   You are leaving the office cafeteria with your tray of lunch. You pause and look around the room and don’t see anyone you recognise. You return to your office/desk to eat alone.

   **Action plan:** The next time you see this drama play out time and time again. You are leaving the office cafeteria with your tray of lunch. You pause and look around the room and don’t see anyone you recognise. You return to your office/desk to eat alone.

3. Passing like ‘ships in the night’.
   You pass someone in the corridor and say “hi”. Your colleague asks “who was that?” You are not in the city anymore, you are both in the same company. So take a moment to stop and find out how their day is going, or how you can help in their success.

   **Action plan:** The next time you walk past a colleague at work and say “hello”, don’t just walk on by. You are not in the city anymore. You are both in the same company. So take a moment to stop and find out how their day is going, or how you can help in their success.

PARTING WISDOM

Connect, don’t disconnect, it could make all the difference, for you and the people you work with.
A WINNING TEAM OF PASSION AND HARD WORK

BY KHIRRIAH KODRY

Khirriah.kodry@leaderonomics.com

M OHD Said Bani C.M. Din is no ordinary achiever. He follows his intuitions and passion based on experiences and skill-mastery, traits that have brought him to his position today.

After spending almost a decade working in organisations focusing on legal consultations in multimedia and information, he has stepped into a different role altogether.

Said Bani is now the managing director of BZ Bee Consult Sdn Bhd, a local public relations (PR) organisation and he believes that it was not a coincidence for him to shift from law to PR.

“I find the skills in doing legal rather similar to PR. Of course, technically there is a huge difference between these two fields but the skills required are pretty much the same. “You need to have good writing and communication skills, the ability to manage negotiations, confidence while speaking and good analytical skills too.”

PASSION VS. ABILITY

Said Bani, who has an honours degree in law from a university in the UK, has always wanted to be a lawyer.

“I worked for several years in the UK before I was called back to my home country due to a scholarship agreement. So I served in both government and private sectors until I was offered to take over my previous employer’s company,” he explained.

The years of work steered him towards starting his own company since he was well-versed in the ability to manage one. Of course, there was the fear of risk taking in the early stages but it did not deter him from pursuing his passion.

Said Bani knows that the PR business heavily relies on good strategies and skills. Hence, it demands good, experienced manpower which accumulates to higher investment.

He also added that as much as he enjoys working in the legal field, he knows that PR, which relates much to the media, has always been at the back of his mind.

“I branched out from the legal department to corporate affairs, which requires both the legal aspect and communication skills. I guess, here is where I realised my passion and moved forward with vigour.

“Any business has its risks but with in-depth research and hard work, it can be tackled. I don’t see what is stopping me from taking up the challenge and just going ahead and doing it,” he said.

INDUCING A HARMONIOUS WORKING ENVIRONMENT

As a company owner, he is passionate about contributing towards building a good business that gives impact not only to him, but also to others involved.

“When I started the company, I introduced a working environment that fosters the spirit of harmony and togetherness”, he added, believing that the latter is important to ensure employees do their best at work.

Said Bani also believes that a leader should be “down to earth” to better understand the strengths of his (or her) team and the obstacles that prevent them from achieving their goals.

“I can still remember situations where I was scolded and had files thrown at me. I was very upset. These experiences taught me not to do so to others, especially my employees because I know how it feels”, he shared.

Besides having a clear vision and the ability to communicate it to the team effectively, he believes that a good leader should also know how to boost the team’s morale for productivity.

“No doubt, the role is very tough but you need to be creative to keep encouraging your team to work smart. Working hard is good but working smart is better so I often expose my employees to this working culture because today’s business industry is very challenging.”

LEARNING THE VALUES

After decades of experience in providing consultancy services, Said Bani knows that passion itself is not enough to make a business prosper.

He believes that a great deal of sacrifice should also be put into account if one is inspired to become successful.

“Sometimes, clients may call you at 3am and you must be prepared for it. My mobile phone is always on standby even though ‘I’m in bed’.

Summarising his personal beliefs and principles at work, he gives his thoughts of good leadership:

BE A SPECIALIST OF MANY

The corporate world requires an individual to be dynamic. As different situations need distinctive actions, it is best to equip oneself with multi-skills, rather than just specialising in one area.

Today, knowledge and information can be obtained easily through various platforms. Thus, each and every one should empower themselves to learn additional skills that will help them go further in life.

BE FLEXIBLE

Your flexibility is very much needed in various aspects of handling a client. For instance, PR is not only about communication and selling but also handling issues pertaining to crisis. There is also the fact of being accommodating to clients. If you are rigid and cannot bend to sudden outbursts, then it is going to be difficult to cater to your clients’ needs and this can make you lose your clients.

TAKE A RISK FOR EXCELLENCE

A new journey comes with risks. However, it can be managed by having a deep understanding of the risks and consequences. So, spend time doing research on the risks and evaluate ways to overcome the possible challenges.

BRAINSTORM

It is important for an organisation to be innovative and to stand out from the rest. To achieve this objective, brainstorming and working as a team is the best way. Do not underestimate the ability of the employees, especially newcomers. Young employees now are known to come up with fresh, good ideas and are willing to try out new methods.

INNOVATIVE EXECUTIONS

Besides planning, the execution of a plan should be done in the most innovative way. Look out for ways of execution that help save cost and time, two important elements that need to be managed well in order to achieve success.
FINDING A ROLE MODEL

By STEPHANIE KEE
editor@leaderonomics.com

Growing up in the age of Mark Zuckerberg pushes every millenial to aspire to make it to the list of “Millionaires Under 30” or “Young Entrepreneur of the Year”. While many are carving out plans to initiate their own start-up or to earn their first million before the age of 25, many are also stumbling, trying to find their footing in this never-ending rat race.

What are we supposed to achieve before we hit the big 30? I’m hardly midway into my 20s and I’m already feeling the pressure to make a name for myself in this world of seven billion people. Of course aiming to be the next Zuckerberg would fairly be unrealistic and could drive oneself mad. And yet, drawing closer to home, there are also many 20-somethings in Malaysia who are already making an impact in the country.

We have the likes of Joel Neoh, founder of Groupon Malaysia; Dzameer Dzulkifli, country (CEO) of Teach For Malaysia; Benjamin Yong, founder and CEO of The Big Group; John-son Oei, founder and CEO of EPIC Collaborative, and the list goes on. These are individuals who have made a name for themselves in their early 20s.

Would it then be more realistic to set these successful young Malaysians as benchmarks?

As I fret about how I could make the most of the decade in my 20s, I find myself searching for the right role model. What can I do to propel myself to success at an early age? After all, if they can do it, why can’t I?

THE SEARCH BEGINS

I’ve had the pleasure of meeting two 20-some-thing leaders who are achieving big things in their careers, but in different ways.

One of them is a charismatic and enthusiastic young gun who is recognised as a youth icon and aspires to be a global life coach. The other is a law activist and a rebel who constantly seeks the opportunity to effect change in the country. Both are impacting Malaysia’s youth.

The youth icon is a serial entrepreneur with businesses in training and project management. He has speaking engagements around the world, with different developing countries, to share his insights on talent development training.

He spends a lot of his time on various youth volunteerism initiatives. He is constantly searching for ways to expand his training business and to create his own brand.

When I met him, he oozed confidence and charisma. I wanted to unlock his insights on understanding and engaging Gen-Y.

I felt like I was talking to an entrepreneur in his 40s who had experienced it all. He had very clear life goals and I could see that he did not fear to dream big. It was clear that his life is driven by his hunger for success and his involvement in various efforts shows his drive and intensity. He may not be a founder or a CEO of a globally recognised company just yet, but he may very well be one someday at the rate that he is going.

The law activist, on the other hand, came off as a skeptic when I first spoke to him. He referred to himself as an “accidental lawyer”.

Although he did not shout about his achievements, I knew he had made a lot of impact in the activism sphere. He had kick-started various action groups, mainly in youth activism, and is known for his ability to rally people to fight for worthwhile causes.

He even made headlines when he proposed a radical idea that shook the legal profession. I doubt he had the intention to be in the media’s limelight as I believe he genuinely had the people’s interests in mind. He leverages on publicity to impact his community.

As we delved deeper into conversation, I realised that his goals are not focused on his personal success and his achieve-ments, but rather on making a difference in whatever way he could.

In the end, he proved my initial impressions wrong and stood out to be a people mobiliser, especially amongst youths.

Both the youth icon and the law activist are potential role models for me. They radiated success in different ways. I wanted to find a role model whose purposes and values resonated most closely with my own.

Here are some questions I asked myself while choosing elements from the two to emulate:

What kind of impact or legacy do I wish to leave behind?

What is my definition of success and is that the success I want to be remembered for?

As Alina Tugend wrote in her New York Times article Sometimes Second-Best Makes a Better Role Model, we have to be cautious on who we pick to emulate because, “The problem of looking at the stars and achievers of the world to make an impact on our lives and those around us. We have to be cautious on who we pick to emulate.”

The impact they make may seem small, but clearly they are closer to home than Zuckerberg. Sometimes, we do not necessarily have to emulate the biggest stars and achievers of the world to make an impact on our lives and those around us.

As Alina Tugend wrote in her New York Times article Sometimes Second-Best Makes a Better Role Model, we have to be cautious on who we pick to emulate because, “The problem of looking at the best of the best might just be depressing rather than being inspirational.”

So have you chosen the right role model? Who would yours be?
By Kathleen Tan
kathleen.tan@leaderonomics.com

KINGSMAN: The Secret Service, is a spy action comedy movie that draws on a basic plot of a zero becoming a hero, with a storyline that offers viewers a refreshing twist. I was very cautious about writing this article, in order not to ruin the movie for anyone who has not watched it yet.

I soon discovered that that was going to be very difficult, since there are so many points to draw on from the plot. Our hero, Eggsy, is an undefined, slightly arrogant young man who finds himself in the daunting position of potentially replacing a fallen Kingsman (a secret agent). He trains and competes against other promising candidates for this position.

Being the underdog in the group naturally evoked his inferiority complex, but as time progresses, Eggsy begins to embrace true Kingsman values and his innate character starts to shine. Watching movies like these always offers viewers a refreshing twist.

For any good movie, one can draw a lot of loyalty, hard work, and determination, reformed in new and refreshing perspectives. And of course, with any good movie, one can draw a lot from it and derive useful takeaways in bringing out our inner Kingsman.

BACKGROUND IS IRRELEVANT
Occasionally, we confine ourselves and set up limits that don’t really exist, all because we are stuck with the mentality that our past determines our future.

Kingsman aptly shows us how inaccurate this thought is; it doesn’t matter where you come from, just where you want to go. In fact, this can sometimes be used to your advantage and become the key factor that sets you apart from the rest.

While his lack of formal education made him feel inferior initially, Eggsy’s street smarts eventually allowed him to get the upper hand on things. Never belittle your roots and your heritage, and don’t despise your small beginnings, because it could potentially be your true value.

TEAMWORK IS CRUCIAL
In the process of becoming a true Kingsman, Eggsy learns a valuable thing or two about teamwork. It’s always good to remember your team; no good-standing individual leaves his (or her) members behind.

Abandoning a team mate reflects badly on anyone, particularly when you are saving yourself at the expense of others. Similarly, focusing on your personal goals without consideration for the common goal could deviate the team from reaching a set target, therefore hindering the progress of the entire team.

DRESS YOUR PART
Dressing suitably is a key factor in giving viewers a refreshing twist. It’s always good to remember your personal key tool. While his lack of formal education made him feel inferior initially, Eggsy’s street smarts eventually allowed him to get the upper hand on things.

Being the underdog in the group naturally evoked his inferiority complex, but as time progresses, Eggsy begins to embrace true Kingsman values and his innate character starts to shine.

Watching movies like these always offers viewers a refreshing twist.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT TOOL
Sometimes, in selecting your weapon, you don’t necessarily need the coolest-looking item in the box. No one instrument is catered to fit every single individual. Instead, consider your true identity when choosing your personal key tool. In a business sense, it is imperative that you gain a good self-awareness, and that you utilise your greatest assets.

In selecting your tool of choice, what is important is that you find your strength and be comfortable with it. Are you good at communication? Vision setting? Innovation? Whatever it may be, find your key tool and use it to your advantage.

BE PREPARED
Always have something up your sleeve, or in Eggsy’s case, in your shoe. It always pays to be prepared for the absolute worst, be it when you’re facing an impossible deadline, when things turn against you, or when you find yourself face to face with an assassin with blades for legs.

While it may be true that you can never be totally prepared, always having a back-up plan can save you time, trouble, and a whole lot of stress. Think ahead, and always try to stay ahead of the game.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS
Perhaps some of us find ourselves needing to fill big shoes; it could be that someone or some circumstance requires you to adapt fast to reach a benchmark. Or maybe you are determined to accomplish a personal mission: to be the best you can be in order to reach the top. However it may be, Kingsman teaches us many valuable lessons that can help us along the way of personal development.

But if there’s one thing you can take away, it is that a true Kingsman exists in all of us and that it only takes dedication, the right attitude to learn, and persistence to bring it out.

May we discover our inner Kingsmans, and never lose sight of our true identities.