BEST EMPLOYERS
BRINGING OUT THE BEST IN THEIR PEOPLE
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A little spark
What triggers one to be a great leader
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OUR UNIVERSE
Building diverse and collaborative networks: what CEOs should know
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BONDS OF SUCCESS
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TAGORE’S THOUGHTS
Nuggets of wisdom for worklife from the legendary poet
 Pg 16
IN recent years, I have started watching loads of basketball and football games. It’s remarkable how personalities reveal themselves so vividly during team sports.

In the younger players, I can see how their coaches have played a role in molding them – whether they “play nice” allowing others to bask in the glory if it means the team as a whole wins, or perpetually stealing the limelight even when other players are better positioned to score.

On building future leaders, Koshin Thran stresses the importance of the three triggers of leadership: moral character, performance character and vision. When things don’t go well, athletes also reveal their dark sides – playing the blame game, or being somewhat delusional of their own abilities (Roshan’s article on self-evaluation highlights perfect examples of these!).

Sometimes, I feel that the word ‘sportsmanship’ has dropped out of the lexicon of some ‘athletes’. On a related note, Morag Barrett shares with us the value of nurturing professional relationships. More on relationship-building, Joseph Tan addresses senior leaders, providing great insights on how nurturing professional relationships. More on relationship-building, Joseph Tan addresses senior leaders, providing great insights on how

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EDITOR’S NOTE
Due to an editing error on page 5 of the March 14, 2015 issue, Cheryl Ved's name was mistated as Cheryl Teh and should be Cheryl Veeh.

1. “Don’t take life too seriously. You’ll never get out of it alive.” – Elbert Hubbard
2. “Our business in life is not to get ahead of others, but to get ahead of ourselves.” – E. Joseph Coxman
3. “When you’re following your energy and doing what you want all the time, the distinction between work and play disappears.” – Shakti Gawain
5. “If you are losing your leisure, look out! – It can also help us form new approaches in ways that our day jobs can’t.”

FLEXIBILITY

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A SPARK IS ALL IT TAKES

By ROSHAN THIRAN

In 2008, I frequently visited the former home of our first Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman Patu Al-Haj at Bukit Tunku, Kuala Lumpur. The property was owned by the Star Media Group then, and interesting discussions took place there.

I specifically remember the morning of Dec 6, as I walked through the estate, and was reminded that it was exactly 18 years since Tunku passed on. I remember thinking about other great leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela and even business leaders like Jack Welch and Howard Schultz and started wondering when and what triggered their leadership success.

WHERE DOES LEADERSHIP BEGIN?

Almost every leader I have met and researched started their leadership journey early in their lives. Sir Richard Branson’s mother kickstarted his journey at the age of five by leaving him a few kilometres away from home and instructing him to find his own way back. Welch’s mother played a huge role in his early leadership development. Even Tunku had his first leadership lessons sowed in his childhood.

A 2005 DDI study by a human resource research company found that 50% of chief executives and board-level directors had at least two leadership roles such as head student, prefect or sports captain in their school years. An Institute of Leadership Management (ILM) study concluded that many future leaders marked themselves out from an early age through early leadership practice.

Kim Parish, chief executive officer of ILM, explains that “this study shows that people learn leadership at a very early age. Activities, such as Scouts, Guides or playing on a school team actually furnish people the skills like team ethos, ambition, goal setting and other qualities we associate with good leadership.”

The poll concluded that holding a position of responsibility at school was the most important indicator of a good future leader – and that academic qualifications were overrated.

We can all agree that leadership lessons learnt during childhood help sow the first seeds of leadership ambition in every leader. Yet, what are the triggers of leadership?

TRIGGERS OF LEADERSHIP:

There is still a lot to learn and explore on early childhood leadership development, but researchers like Angela Duckworth, David Levin and Dominic Randolph have started to postulate that a lot of successful leaders are where they are today because of how they developed their “character”.

Most of us will agree that developing a person’s leadership character, which includes their values, is critical. Yet, that cannot be the only reason for success. We all know of many young adults with impeccable character traits, yet are unlikely to scale the heights of leadership greatness.

These researchers explain there are two types of character – moral character and “performance” character. Most of us are well-versed with moral character and ethical values such as love, generosity, humility and integrity. Performance character is different from moral character. Those that ultimately became great leaders, were those who developed moral character together with this “performance” character.

PERFORMANCE CHARACTER

So, what is performance character? Performance character is based on values too but involve values such as curiosity, tenacity, perseverance, and diligence. In fact, an insightful book entitled How Children Succeed by Paul Tough prescribes seven “performance character” values that are essential for success.

They are:

_GRAIT
_Grit
_Self-control
_Zest
_Social intelligence
_Gratitude
_Optimism
_Curiosity

According to Tough, the two most important reasons why children succeed is because of the ability to develop grit and curiosity early on in their lives. As we explore many business leaders, we do find that almost all of them developed a deep sense of curiosity early on in their childhood.

Branson loved to explore and experiment. Ben Franklin lived to ask questions. Most great leaders also developed a deep sense of perseverance early on in their lives. They were able to withstand pain to obtain their goals. In fact, in many cases, in spite of having no rewards, their conscientiousness shone.

Clearly, these performance character traits, when coupled with moral character, provide a powerful early trigger in the development of leadership.

Yet, there is one other element I believe that completes the trinity of early leadership triggers. This is an area that is a critical part of leadership – vision.

THE TRIGGER THAT CREATES THE SPARK

Every great leader has a clear vision of change – being able to take their followers to a new place. Many books have been written about how to develop a vision but in most cases, the vision which they paint that energises their followers is something that does not come overnight to a leader but is something that is developed over a period of time.

Gandhi’s experiences in South Africa of being treated horribly set the tone for his vision for a free India. Schultz’s experience watching his father being mistreated by his employer enabled him to develop the vision for Starbucks. You will find the same story for almost every entrepreneur and leader. Their early experiences, especially the unpleasant ones, helped them develop a vision of change.

Once this vision is formalised and communicated, it provides the spark that gets the fire going. An energising vision is always going to be the spark that gets a movement going.

SO, HOW DO WE LEARN TO DEVELOP A VISION?

Most leaders start their vision process when they endure specific “crucible” moments in their lives which leave them frustrated and searching for “answers” to their questions.

As they go around searching for answers, they usually spend some time alone or in solitude. During this time of solitude, their “vision” for their organisation is realised.

Steve Jobs spent a few years in India prior to starting Apple. Likewise, leaders like Gandhi (and even “bad” leaders such as Adolf Hitler) spent time in solitude as they formed their vision.

MORAL CHARACTER IS KEY TOO

Performance character alone with vision is very dangerous. Many young children who have had their performance character developed without moral character could end up like Hitler. Hitler learnt grit, self-control and curiosity. More importantly, he spent time in solitude (prison) and developed a clear vision for his nation.

Yet, the fact that he had no moral compass to guide him due to his lack of development of moral character resulted with Hitler being the example of bad leadership at its worst.

FINAL THOUGHTS

You ask yourself a question, how do we learn to develop our leadership at an early age?

Parents and teachers play a critical role in helping to instil not just moral character, but also reinforcing and enabling performance character to be developed early in life.

Where does that leave us if we are now in our 20s, 30s or even older? Is there no hope for us? Is there no way to change?

A great fact to remember is that 95% of who we are today is learnt. This means that regardless of age, who we are can be changed.

We know for a fact that we can still keep growing with regards to our brain and leadership. This means that if we focus on developing our moral and performance character, we stand a shot at accumulating our experiences to develop vision.

Our vision for a better tomorrow will never be the spark that triggers your leadership into action.

So, whether you are a parent, teacher or a corporate leader, you need to be involved in either the process of triggering sparks of change or enabling a young person to learn leadership.

WHETHER YOU ARE A PARENT, TEACHER OR A CORPORATE LEADER, YOU NEED TO BE INVOLVED IN EITHER THE PROCESS OF TRIGGERING SPARKS OF CHANGE OR ENABLING A YOUNG PERSON TO LEARN LEADERSHIP

This weekend, take time to “be a leader” or help others to fulfill their potential to be the leader they were meant to be.

By ROSHAN THIRAN

roshan.thiran@leaderonomics.com

Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj at Tunku Abdul Rahman School in Kuala Lumpur.

By Roshan Thiran

Roshan Thiran is CEO of Leaderonomics, a social enterprise that works hard to develop all leaders, including from the NGO sector. Roshan believes there is hope for a better Malaysia with better leadership. To dialogue with Roshan daily, go to www.facebook.com/roshanthiran, leaderonomics or connect with him on LinkedIn.
AON Hewitt’s Best Employers – Malaysia is back again! In the 2015 Malaysia study, Aon Hewitt recently recognised 10 companies as best employers. The Best Employers in Asia-Pacific study started in 2001 with a three-fold aim:

- to provide insights into how to create real competitive advantage through people.
- to explore what makes a workplace of choice.
- to identify the best employers in the region.

Research from the study has shown some interesting common traits between organisations that are deemed best employers. Comparatively with other organisations, they:

- achieved double the growth in profit.
- achieved over 20 percentage points higher employee engagement levels.
- observed lower employee turnover levels.
- observed higher percentage of employees being internally promoted, particularly managers.

THE ‘HOWS’
The 2015 study offers a professional, data-driven approach to recognising the best employers through the use of three data sources, an external judging panel and larger coverage in Asia-Pacific.

Aon Hewitt identifies four measurable factors as vital in contributing to a best employer recognition (See Figure 1).

SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARDS
The study also featured three special recognition awards to acknowledge organisations with best practices in these areas:

- Engaging Gen-Y
  The millennials are increasingly in search of careers that are able to cater to higher needs: opportunity for development, purpose, alignment of personal and company values, and work-life balance.

- Engaging women in the workforce
  With diversity and inclusion practices being key on many organisations’ agenda, it was important that the study highlighted what organisations are doing to attract, engage and retain women in the workforce.

- Commitment to engagement
  Consistent engagement and credible people initiatives are key features on the journey to be a best employer, as employee engagement becomes a continuous process not to be taken for granted in the long-term.

THE JUDGING PANEL

Johann Mahmod Merican was appointed chief executive officer (CEO) of Talent Corporation Malaysia Bhd (TalentCorp) since its establishment on Jan 1, 2011. TalentCorp focuses on building partnerships, particularly between leading employers and relevant public agencies, particularly between leading employers and relevant public agencies.

Jenny Ooi is the head of human resource for USG Boral. She champions its people as USG Boral’s competitive advantage to impact and improve the way the world lives.

Sajith Sivanandan is managing director of Google Malaysia, where he oversees sales, partnerships and business development operations in the country.

Wahab is also the co-author of the book Your Dream Job published in 2009.
development opportunities include diverse experiences with global talent, potential for growth, opportunity to unleash their maximum potential, retention. It enables the career development, its focus on selection of premium candidates, and the development of a talent pipeline. Aligning with the Starbucks mission—"To inspire and nurture the human spirit, Starbucks Malaysia strives to inspire and develop its partners to achieve their personal best.

Managing the business through the "lens of humanity," Starbucks Malaysia motivates its partners by providing the Starbucks Experience which includes extrinsic elements like rewards, benefits, and opportunities for career development.

Aligning with the Starbucks mission—"To inspire and nurture the human spirit, Starbucks Malaysia strives to inspire and develop its partners to achieve their personal best.

Express employees embody the global brand and its greatest characteristics, having been one of the hallmarks of the company, a technology innovator and a people business serving burgers. Their passion and "can-do" attitude, delivers a truly world-class service and ensures that shipments get to their destination securely and as quickly as possible.

What really sets them apart is the international shipping expertise of their people. Their knowledge, coupled with their passion and "can-do" attitude, delivers a truly world-class service and ensures that shipments get to their destination securely and as quickly as possible.

Robert Frager, chairman, Marriott and Renaissance Hotels Malaysia Business Council.

Ramesh Kumar Singam, managing director of Malaysia and Brunei.

Oppenheimer Pinto, general manager.

FEDEX EXPRESS

FEDEX EXPRESS, a subsidiary of FedEx Corp, is the world's largest express transportation company and connects every major location in Asia to a global network reaching more than 200 countries and territories. FedEx Express has been providing time-definite and reliable delivery services in Asia with its global air-ground network for 30 years. In Asia-Pacific, FedEx Express serves more than 1,300 destinations and territories and has approximately 18,000 employees. FedEx Express has been consistently recognized as a world-class company, a technology innovator and an employer of choice.

Sydney Quays, managing director of Starbucks Coffee Malaysia and Brunei.

Christopher Ong, managing director of Malaysia and Brunei.

Glenmarie is also a two-time recipient of the Holiday Inn brand.

Holiday Inn Kuala Lumpur Glenmarie provides the services for business and leisure travellers, while also offering a comfortable atmosphere where people can relax and enjoy amenities such as restaurants, room service, swimming pool, and fitness centre.

Holiday Inn Kuala Lumpur Glenmarie is also a two-time recipient of the Aon Hewitt’s Best Employer Malaysia Award in 2011 and 2013.

Robert Frager, chairman, Marriott and Renaissance Hotels Malaysia Business Council.

MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL, MALAYSIA

MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL INC has seven hotels in Malaysia which comprises of Renaissance Kuala Lumpur Hotel, Renaissance Johor Baru Hotel, Renaissance Kota Bharu Hotel, JW Marriott Kuala Lumpur, The Ritz-Carlton Kuala Lumpur, Muri Marriott Resort & Spa and Marriott Putrajaya. These properties are also part of the Malaysia Business Council which was formed in 1999.

 Marriott has been known for a culture that puts people first. "Take care of associates and they will take care of the customers" has always been their motto. "Our people first" culture has consistently earned them awards and recognition around the globe. Giving associates opportunities to grow and succeed is part of the company’s DNA. Marriott’s core values make who they are. As they evolve and grow, the beliefs that are most important to them stay the same—Putting People First, Pursuing Excellence, Embracing Change, Acting with Integrity and Serving Our World. Being part of Marriott International means being part of a proud history and a thriving culture.

Robert Frager, chairman, Marriott and Renaissance Hotels Malaysia Business Council.

Datuk C.J. Khor, acting president and chief executive officer.

SOME DARBY PROPERTY BHD

SOME DARBY PROPERTY is an established property group focused on becoming the leading developer of sustainable communities. Its core businesses are property development, property investment and asset management. It has operations in five countries, namely Malaysia, the United Kingdom, Singapore, Vietnam and Australia. Some Darby Property is a multiple award-winning property group with numerous local and international accolades. It is the first Malaysian property developer to be awarded the International FIABCI Prix d’Excellence Awards twice for its Subang Jaya and UEP Subang Jaya townships.

Datuk Seri Abd Wahab Maskan, managing director.

INTEGRITY & SERVICE: Victoria Choo, chief executive officer.

SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARDS: STARS: "Best Performing Stock" award at The Edge Billion Ringgit Club Awards 2014 and the Notable Achievement Award 2014 at The Edge Property Excellence Awards 2014. Given the vast experience of its management team, the Group is aggressively expanding its reach to include projects in Sydney, Australia and London, Britain.

Stephen Chew, managing director.

MCDONALD’S MALAYSIA

MCDONALD’S is a leading “Quick Service Restaurant” chain serving quality, great-tasting food, with a warm and friendly service, in a clean and welcoming environment, all at great value. In Malaysia, McDonald’s has 12,000 mostly local employees in nearly 270 restaurants nationwide. Its people philosophy is fittingly expressed by founder, Ray Kroc. We are not a burg- er business serving people, we are a people business serving burgers.

Rahul Singh, general manager, Kuala Lumpur Global Service Centre.

AMERICAN EXPRESS (M) SDN BHD

THROUGHOUT the company’s 165-year history, service has been one of the hallmarks of the American Express as a premium global brand and its greatest competitive advantage. American Express employees embody the proud heritage of this global brand. American Express is an employer of choice in Malaysia because of its focus on selection of premium talent, employee development and retention. It enables the career journeys of employees through an environment that allows them the opportunity to unleash their maximum potential.

American Express offers richly diverse experiences with global exposure through an abundance of development opportunities including leadership training, employee interest networks, continuing education assistance and access to mentoring by a diverse leadership team.

American Express has been perfecting their service for more than 220 countries and territories, focused on delivering high levels of service.

What really sets them apart is the international shipping expertise of their people. Their knowledge, coupled with their passion and “can-do” attitude, delivers a truly world-class service and ensures that shipments get to their destination securely and as quickly as possible.

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Sri Liew Kee Sin. Liew identified the talent development and building the leadership team, who also embrace the senior management’s commitment to investing into building a long-term career path for individuals. “We believe when values are aligned and the attitude is right, there is definitely a better chance for these individuals to build a long-term career and become a company of significance, capable of creating a positive impact in the lives of our people, our community and our nation,” says Datuk S. Rajoo, chief operating officer of EcoWorld.

EcoWorld strongly believes in creating well-rounded and caring individuals who impact both the company and communities they serve. The wealth of experience of the respected industry players leading EcoWorld combined with the youthful energy and enthusiasm of its people powers EcoWorld to scale ever greater heights.

Team EcoWorld is like an award-winning lion dance troupe performing together. From the brave young lions dancing on stilts to the drummers and percussionists providing a strong and steady beat to the coaches giving encouragement to the whole team from the ground - every member is important and we have to rely and trust all our teammates to do their very best. This is the only way we can scale ever greater heights and become a company of significance, capable of creating a positive impact in the lives of our people, our community and our nation.” - Tan Sri Liew Kee Sin, Chairman

EcoWorld’s quest in building a highly skilled management talent pool to building a culture of excellence, the entire team worked in unison to contribute towards EcoWorld earning the accolade of Best Employer Malaysia 2015 by Aon Hewitt. Being recognised as one of the Aon Hewitt Best Employers Malaysia 2015 represents a significant milestone in EcoWorld’s quest in building a highly engaged talent pool who will go beyond the extra mile in delivering results. “I want to thank every member of Team EcoWorld for their contributions which enabled EcoWorld to earn this accolade. It is the best testament to great teamwork in action!” said Datuk Chang Khim Wah, the president and chief executive officer of EcoWorld.

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Creating tomorrow and Beyond

TALENT DEVELOPMENT

EcoWorld recognises every single employee as talent – and this acknowledgement brings a sense of pride throughout the organisation. Talent is nurtured and groomed to become empowered leaders in whatever position they hold. The people development strategy at EcoWorld is owned and executed not just by the talent management team, but wholly supported by the senior leadership team, who also embrace the role of talent development through mentorships. “One of the great things about our company is that everyone is engaged in talent development and building leaders of tomorrow,” says Chang. During his development phase, Chang was privileged to be personally mentored by EcoWorld’s chairman Tan Sri Liew Kee Sin. Liew identified the potential in the young man and gave him the many opportunities which have enabled him to take on the role of CEO today.

Today, Chang and his management team supports the people agenda at EcoWorld that not only builds future leaders, but prepares today’s leaders to gradually grow out of their existing portfolio of responsibilities so that they too can progressively assume more senior leadership roles. And through this agenda, EcoWorld endeavours to build a pipeline of future leaders, one that will live on and continue to be elevated to set new industry benchmarks.

PRIORITY ENGAGEMENT

With the business in full gear to expand and grow, EcoWorld is heavily dependent on a highly-engaged workforce to embrace the vision, mission and values of the company.

The mission, vision and values were created by the team to reflect the manner in which the team wanted to achieve the company’s objectives. Buy-in began at the very inception when the company was started.

Many organisations recognise the importance of an engaged workforce, however not all have found the right formula to achieve a sustainable engagement. EcoWorld has an enviable engagement score that can be attributed to several factors. On top of training and sharpening work skills, the personal wellbeing of the team is also prioritised! The lifestyle posters reminding everyone that “looking good on the inside (clear lungs and clean bill of health) is as important as looking good on the outside” is a health promotion effort that is widely embraced by the entire team.

ENGAGEMENT

In a complex network of interdependent teams, EcoWorld maintains its high standards due, in no small part, to having talent in sufficient numbers and with the right skill sets. “We look for individuals whose personal values are in alignment with EcoWorld’s values, which centre on Teamwork, Integrity and Commitment to Excellence. We believe when values are aligned and the attitude is right, there is definitely a better chance for these individuals to build a long-term career with the company,” says Angelin Lye, divisional general manager of group talent management. EcoWorld firmly believes in “home-grown” management, and as such, has committed to investing into building its talent pipeline.

We asked some talent what were the deciding factors in joining and growing with EcoWorld:

“So I joined two years ago, I have been given opportunities I never imagined possible. My leaders believe in me and entrust me with the management of important assignments and projects.” - Liew Tian Xiong, group corporate marketing

“Strong leadership. I trust the leaders of EcoWorld and look forward to facing new challenges together.” - Datuk S. Rajoo, chief operating officer

“From day one till today, the talent management team and my direct supervisor have invested time and energy to identify my strengths and develop my skills.” - Azrain Azlan, group business development

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“With the business in full gear to expand and grow, EcoWorld is heavily dependent on a highly-engaged workforce to embrace the vision, mission and values of the company.” - Datuk Voon Tin Yow, executive director
WALKING A DAY IN THE LIFE OF ECOWORLD TALENTS
Let’s take a closer look

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUN</th>
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<td>Ariz Rashid INVESTOR RELATIONS</td>
<td>Attended Good Morning EcoWorld.</td>
<td>Site visit Eco Majestic, Semenyih.</td>
<td>Team planning meeting for new assignment.</td>
<td>A grammarian at EcoWorld Toastmaster’s luncheon meeting.</td>
<td>Roadshow and meeting with fund managers and shareholders. Video-conferencing with Eco South colleagues.</td>
<td>Wonderful outing with family.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kenny Chan GROUP TALENT MANAGEMENT</td>
<td>Workout in the gym.</td>
<td>Financial Data Analysis and report writing.</td>
<td>Meeting with service provider.</td>
<td>Brainstormed with the “NEWS” editorial team on upcoming issue.</td>
<td>Departmental meeting assignments and projects.</td>
<td>Meetings with superior and external parties.</td>
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<td>Football practice with colleagues.</td>
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<td>Afternoon tea with friends and colleagues.</td>
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engaged, and ultimately also fuels better employee engagement. At EcoWorld, talent are empow-
ered to develop and propose ideas and innovations that help improve operations, systems, structures and processes. And these are not limited to only big breakthrough ideas, but any workable idea no matter how small, and even for other departments or divisions.

As ideas as well as WOW stories are shared dur-
ing the weekly Good Morning EcoWorld (GMEW) sessions. To encourage others to emu-
late them, WOW stories include stories by talent who have raised the bar in their work like going the extra mile for customers and com-
munity around them.

Common goals is another way of fostering teamwork and continuously engaging the workforce. These goals— not necessarily business goals, include reaching peaks like Mount Kinabalu and running the annual KL Rat Race—bring the workforce closer as it involves training and enduring tough times together and achieving the goals together as well.

As talent development tops the list of its people agenda, EcoWorld invests in learning and development initia-
tives to build future leaders towards realising its vision of “Creating Tomorrow and Beyond”. With 60% of the workforce being Gen-Y, the talent management team has intentionally carved out formal and informal learning opportunities through various touchpoints with senior leaders including the chairman and CEO.

EcoWorld customises its learning and development programmes to groom high potential Gen-Y talents into its next-generation leaders.

CREATING THE TALENT TO CREATE TOMORROW

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tives to build future leaders towards realising its vision of “Creating Tomorrow and Beyond”.

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HARD WORK & TAKING INITIATIVE PAYS OFF!

Encouraging younger employ-
ees to volunteer to manage company events and activities, is a means of spotting talents and engaging those who have dem-
Onstrate their leadership potential and resilience in taking chal-
enges beyond their core role in the company. Due recognition is given to those who excel by fast tracking their career progression.

Talent spotting also extends to sup-
port teams at EcoWorld, which are given equal opportunity for leadership development. In her own team, Low has also identified several high poten-
tials for leadership development.

DIVERSITY — BUILDING ON OUR STRENGTHS AND COMMON GOALS

Engaging with such diverse groups requires insights into each generation’s needs, aspirations and expectations to have total buy-in. As EcoWorld expands rapidly both domestically and internationally, the Group will continue to explore more innovative means and ways in embracing “Diversity at Work” in a more holistic manner.

“Engaging talent is a complex subject matter as it deals with matters of the mind and heart of people. While it sounds like a myth, embracing diversity and treating people with respect and humility are definitely big steps forward in demystifying it,” says Liew.
Managing director
Sydney Quays
throughout Malaysia
promoted managers and store managers itself to be a great employer. Starbucks strives to position bigger, make meaningful daily connections and best self, have an impact, connect with something opportunities by encouraging its partners to be one's part of the organisation.

Above the rest
set ApArt As the Best

“We have formal and informal, planned and unstructured elements (management style, work environment and culture). Through its Talent Acquisition Channel, the organisation plans, attracts, selects, hires and provides great compensation and benefits.

OBJECTIVE: To build leadership bench readiness.

After setting expectations, partners at Starbucks are empowered to chart their own career paths and success. Learning and development programmes are newly prepared to support them in their career growth. Starbucks strives to engage and inspire partners to achieve their personal best by engendering internal promotion opportunities. Such opportunities directly support the business objective of store growth in Malaysia. The sustainability and continuity of Starbucks lie in the speed of knowledge distribution through their best practice sharing. This is further enabled by being actively connected with both their local and international Starbucks networks. With strong G in V in the workforce, the recognition and reward system has evolved to be the top motivator of employees’ performance.

Starbucks also organises fan, relevant and engaging activities for partners all year round which include local and overseas leadership conferences in Asia-Pacific countries.

COFFEE AND CULTURE Objective: To ensure delivery of quality products and services through structured training and development.

In cultivating a coffee culture at Starbucks, coffee knowledge is shared among all partners to empower them to become brand ambassadors. After all, the more they know about the product, the more confident they are in their roles and

more they have the role they desire. Starbucks provides the following two platforms to collaborate partners’ coffee passions, Coffee Master Programme and Latte Art Programme. In ensuring partners appreciate the origins of their coffee, Starbucks has a unique programme called the “Origins Experience”, an immersive coffee education tour that allows their partners to experience first-hand coffee origins from different parts of the world.

All partners are eligible to apply for assistance. It is funded only by partners’ monthly contributions and fundraising efforts.

As an organisation that provides ample opportunities by encouraging its partners to be one’s best self, have an impact, connect with something bigger, make meaningful daily connections and be a lifelong partner, Starbucks strives to position bigger, make meaningful daily connections and best self, have an impact, connect with something opportunities by encouraging its partners to be one's part of the organisation.

“Achievement of our partners is a major raison why Starbucks is regarded as the leading specialty coffee company and the industry benchmark in Malaysia.”

As a young father, I need to work harder to benchmark my capacity – and with a reliable and trusted brand like Starbucks, it gives me a sense of relief that my son’s future is secure. I never stop learning, I strived off my career in operations. Starbucks then gave me the opportunity to join the Construction and Facilities team and there are many new opportunities with Starbucks. I am a Group partner, project manager, Starbucks Malaysia and Brunei.

This April marks my 15 years at Starbucks and despite being 54, I am proud to be a Starbucks partner. I will continue to provide “the third place” and great coffee for our customers! Aside from being a partner, I am also a manager coach mentor to my partners.

I always ensure that every employee develops the necessary skills and knowledge, and further advancement in their career. There are always opportunities for career growth and development in Starbucks, and it is happy to share my experience and train partners.

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Barista, 15 years old, Starbucks store manager

At Starbucks, we are all about sharing and creating moments of connection over coffee. I am a certified coffee master and have conducted many after office sessions and seminars through my journey at Starbucks. I am always excited to share my passion and knowledge with coffee and my customers and partners. The experience also has been especially enjoyable when they appreciate and bond over coffee.

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Barista, 9 years old, Starbucks store manager

I first participated in a global (Global Month of Service) in 2019. I was amazed by the number of participants we gathered in our service projects. The experience definitely inspired me to be more a responsible neighbour and active contributor to the community. I was given the opportunity last year to lead an entire district to create a lasting connection with the community. The initiative allows me to be involved in community projects and in return, to share our amazing stories with customers. With love, we serve.

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Barista, 9 years old, Starbucks store manager

I was a full-time barista when I first started working at Starbucks six years ago. As I needed to further my studies, I thought of changing my position to a part-time barista. I was involved in many corporate social responsibility projects throughout the years and have been given the opportunity to meet our partners and customers.

I enjoy bonding with our local communities and making a difference to our environment. I realised how serious Starbucks is in presenting their community, and it greatly inspired me and others. Starbucks partners take pride in making a difference.
S P Setia, Malaysia’s leading property developer, is a familiar name in the property industry. Its vision of excellence and commitment to product and service quality is the cornerstone of its success, with many remarkable achievements attributed to its dedicated Team Setia.

Currently at 1,800 employees and counting, S P Setia aspires to sustain its leadership positions, while inspiring passion and continuous team spirit in its people.

With strong belief in its human capital as the pillar of the company, S P Setia has, over the years, embarked on various talent development and recognition initiatives. S P Setia was named Best Employers in Malaysia by Aon Hewitt for six times in 2003, 2005, 2009, 2011, 2013 and most recently in 2015. It was also the two-time recipient of the prestigious Best of the Best Employer Award Malaysia in 2011 and 2013 respectively on top of being the only Malaysian property developer to be listed as one of the Best Employers in Asia in 2011.

This recognition creates a sense of pride among employees and further strengthens the level of employee engagement within the company. “S P Setia participates in Aon Hewitt Best Employers in Malaysia programme over the years because the award serves as a credible industry benchmark, among others, for the human resources [HR] initiatives which we have implemented. The recognition has helped to strengthen our company’s brand positioning in the market as an organisation that lives, learns, works and plays well with its communities, especially through our employees, known as Team Setia. People know that we work hard but at the same time, we learn and grow together as a team and we also make time to play,” said Datuk Khor Chap Jen, acting president and chief executive officer (CEO) of S P Setia.

INSPIRING A CULTURE OF EXCELLENCE

To be a part of Team Setia, which employees of S P Setia are fondly known, every staff member in the company is inducted into the culture of excellence from the very first day at the company. This is in line with the company’s vision “to be the BEST in all we do”. A big part of the company’s positive brand image is built on the foundation of a united Team Setia, which is made up of motivated people with high team spirit, and who are willing to go the extra mile for their colleagues and the company’s stakeholders.

S P Setia also administers the People Pulse survey on a yearly basis, which provides valuable insights into its people issues and engagement level. Information from the survey helps the company innovate initiatives which target the core of people issues within the organisation.

Team Setia starts out every working day with a Good Morning Setia or GMS session, where employees within their respective divisions gather to express their concerns, place suggestions for work improvement and share industry updates among colleagues. This not only improves employees’ knowledge of the industry, but also creates healthy engagement between colleagues and the organisation.

Another good practice within S P Setia is its bi-annual CEO’s dialogue session where discussions about the company’s current performance, plans for the year, planned changes and face-to-face consultation with employees on issues they might be facing take place.

TALENT RETENTION

In its quest to drive a high performance culture, S P Setia sets transparent and merit-based reward systems to drive engagement. One such reward system is the Long Term Incentive Plan (LTIP), which aims at rewarding S P Setia employees with company shares, in addition to yearly performance bonus and increments. The LTIP was designed to ensure that employees’ contribution and performance towards the development, growth and success of the company would be recognised and rewarded accordingly. It is also highly-rewarding to be a part of Team Setia, as over the past few years, the company has spread its wings to countries such as Vietnam, China, Singapore, Australia and the United Kingdom.

As the company goes global, it is intent on embracing the diversity of its workforce. Although costly, the company often ensures that employees are given international assignments in order to get cross-border exposure. The importance of growing internationally savvy talents, especially in future leaders of the company, is aligned with the company’s people initiatives – which is to produce competencies such as being visionary, passionate, inspiring, as well as the ability to think strategically.

Team Setia is encouraged to attend training sessions, which are included in their Key Performance Index (KPI). A comprehensive yearly training calendar focusing on various competencies such as strategic planning, property insights and business communications is made available to all employees at the beginning of every year.

LIVELEARNWORKPLAY PHILOSOPHY

True to S P Setia’s philosophy of “LiveLearnWorkPlay”, the company encourages Team Setia to include “Play” in their lives. Festive gatherings, family days as well as sports and team building activities are organised year round. S P Setia’s annual dinner is regarded as the highlight of the year.

During this special event, employees from its offices in Penang, Johor, Sabah, and Klang Valley, as well as the international team from Vietnam, China, Singapore, Australia and the United Kingdom gather for a fun-packed evening with performances by Team Setia from various business divisions.

It is a good platform for all employees to get to know one another and to meet in a more relaxed environment than they might only have come across via email. In 2013, the company organised its first expedition with over 80 members of Team Setia to conquer Mount Kinabalu. The objective of this initiative was to enhance confidence, drive the power of execution and promote teamwork amongst team members. Led by key senior management of the company, members of Team Setia has been conquering the mountain on a yearly basis ever since.

With a strong team in place and culture of excellence, S P Setia is poised to grow from strength to strength. Employees can look forward to continuously enhanced initiatives and improvements within the organisation for a sustainable career growth.

With its philosophy of LiveLearnWorkPlay, S P Setia prides itself on being a nurturing organisation, providing career development as well as compelling benefits for staff.
ABOUT a decade ago, the only mantra that an organisation needed was “Put Customers first”, then everything else would be aligned and profits would come pouring in. Not so in today’s universe of corporate variables. The field now contains many more players, and even customers themselves may not always be right.

If you are a leader, the realisation is this – your pool of followers and associates have just gotten more diverse, more difficult to manage, more difficult to please. And on top of that, the customer still wants to be right.

Marcus Buckingham states: “Above all else, a leader must be clear.” No mapping of your universe is possible if you don’t even know how that universe looks like.

Hence, before you identify your stake- holders, define the scope and extent of your organisation’s universe.

FROM an organisational consulting perspective, we would label your universe as “company vision” – that overused word which gets a bad rap because it is usually the rallying point for high executive fervour, but is poorly executed. Yet, without vision, an organisation will perish.

HAVE A CLEAR VISION

The challenge is not the validity of a leader’s vision. Rather, it is in his ability to operationalise that vision into key results which will excite and align the entire organisation. Gallup reports that only 13% of employees worldwide are engaged – the reason for this lacklustre finding is not the absence of vision, rather it is in the lack of clarity.

How can the leader translate the vision with such precision so that every frontline employee carries the passion to achieve the result rather than just doing a job?

An example from Partners in Leadership was a random visit to one of their clients (a restaurant chain) revealed an employee who was busy clearing the tables.

When asked what his job was, he responded, “My job is to achieve a 5.5% profit margin, and here’s how I do it: The more people we seat, the greater our contribution. The greater our contribution, the better our margin. That’s what I do.”

THE CONVERSATION: THE CHAL- LENGE

The mapping of your company’s universe is incomplete if every frontline employee cannot articulate your desired key result.

In one of my consulting sessions, a senior manager remarked, “The test of an organisation’s vision is this: the results to be achieved must be so clear that even the tea lady can articulate it with ease and confidence.” He is right.

Assuming that there is clarity of vision, here are three broad groups of stakehold- ers that you as the organisational leader need to embrace into your “eco-vision” (a group of interrelated players which rein- force a common direction): ECO-PLAYER NO. 1: THOSE WITH CONVICTION

In the pursuit of profitability and growth, it is easy for the organisation to be so caught up in its many roles that it forgets about its soul.

Without conviction, the operation of the company becomes dry, clinical and routine – yes, the numbers are coming in but the hearts and minds of employees are nowhere to be found.

That is the reason why certain com- panies keep framed photos of their founder(s) at the reception area – their image represents the passion and pur- pose by which the organisation was founded in the first place.

Profits – real, sustainable ones – are an outcome of the leader’s conviction. Being busy without a sense of conviction and mission would lead a company down the slippery road of performance without engagement.

The task then is to stay in touch with those who represent the spirit and reason why the organisation was established. Get the employees to connect with employees during town hall meetings, share life experiences and give testimoni- als.

Who are those whom you should consider as your compensators?

● Current customers.
● Consider your customers’ customers/suppliers/partners.
● Investors, venture capitalists.
● Complementary partners.

CONCLUSION: THE CALL TO LEAD CLEARLY

At the end of the day, it is not what you sell but what you stand for. As you lead your organisation through a maze and network of eco-relationships, your stakeholders are looking for a beacon of clarity – a true north by which they can align their time, talent and resources.

When the number of relationships increase, resist the temptation of trying to be everything to everyone – this pleas- es the crowd but dilutes the vision.

Your role as the organisational leader is to provide the rallying point that aligns the network together and to ensure that the vision stays clear, consistent and sharp.

Leading a company is not what it used to be because the vision is not as clear as what it ought to be.
SIME DARBY PROPERTY, RISING TO THE CHALLENGE

THE BEST EMPLOYERS BELIEVE IN HELPING EMPLOYEES REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL

ORGANISATIONS with strong sense of purpose and identity can achieve remarkable things. They also attract and keep great talent, by having a strongly shared culture that drives extraordinary levels of employee motivation, loyalty and performance.

The Sime Darby Group is undoubtedly such an organisation. This diversified multinational was recently catapulted into the limelight when it became the first Malaysian company to receive the 2014 Global Aon Hewitt Top Companies for Leaders award. The recognition was apt and timely; Sime Darby has long been known for its best-in-class talent management practices around the world, having consistently produced strong leaders from within its ranks.

In addition to the global award, the group cemented its position within the region when it beat 180 blue chip companies to clinch a second award, the South East Asia 2014 Aon Hewitt Top Companies for Leaders.

CHAMPIONING THE TALENT AGENDA

These triumphs have set the benchmark for all five divisions under the group’s umbrella to further strengthen their human resource (HR) practices and capabilities. By cascading initiatives from the group, Sime Darby has not only improved its position as an employer of choice, but continues to pioneer good leadership practices and expectations across the board.

Thus, it comes as no surprise that Sime Darby Property Bhd, one of the divisions within the group, has continued to ride on this wave of success when it received a prestigious nod as one of Aon Hewitt Best Employers 2015 in Malaysia.

The company’s managing director, Datuk Seri Abd Wahab Maskan, reveals that having 100% commitment to employee development, trust and openness is really at the heart of their operations.

Abd Wahab adds, “You can judge a company by the people that it keeps. The Best Employer 2015 award is not only a recognition of what we have accomplished, but it is an affirmation that we are on the right track in our HR transformation journey which we started five years ago.”

ATTRACTING and developing talents are central to an organisation’s success and for this Sime Darby Property has put in place various policies covering recruitment, training and development, labour practices, human rights and workplace health and safety.

In 2010, in accordance with the group’s strategic growth plans, Sime Darby Property went one step further. The company identified a clear HR roadmap and embarked on a transformation journey with these primary objectives:

- To foster strong individual and organisational performance.
- To focus on talent and leadership development.
- To effectively identify, attract and retain needed talent.

“We needed to be very clear about the kind of talent we were looking for. Our people are our greatest asset and key to maintaining our competitive advantage,” he declares, adding that the top management, HR fraternity and line managers have been the main force and backbone of championing the talent agenda.

Life at Sime Darby Property has become even more interesting since it was a conscious decision by the group to benchmark themselves against top competitors in terms of being employers of choice for each of the markets/businesses that they operated in.

One of the most critical moves was to make all leaders carry an engaging KPI in their scorecards. This unusual but effective tactic promoted an effective feedback loop and maintained the momentum of driving employer engagement.

At the other end of the spectrum, employees are asked to voice their concerns through regular engagement surveys. According to Ammar Ghazali, head of human resources and administration, “We had about 1,200 employees taking the survey in 2014, which is an increase in the survey engagement score from the previous year. We believe that employees provide valuable insights which allow our leaders to develop action plans.”

In order to retain professionals of a high calibre, employees are given the opportunity to learn new skill sets.

“We help them grow and move forward in their careers by providing holistic talent development interventions that include action learning programmes, training, coaching, talent rotations and talent exchange/attachment programmes. By developing people, we create an engaging workforce which allows us to compete effectively,” declares Ammar.
A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE
By embracing an inclusive culture that supports diverse talent, Sime Darby Property has become an employer of choice in Malaysia. Its positive brand reputation comes from the way employees are encouraged to learn and grow. According to Zubkifli Zainal, executive vice-president of Group human resources, “In Sime Darby, we celebrate our values of respect, caring, managing change and sustainable work ambience. I enjoy working here. It always feels good to go to work in the morning.”

1. LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT
Sime Darby places a strong emphasis in developing talent across all levels from senior management to junior employees. High performers and high potentials are identified and provided with developmental opportunities that span beyond classroom trainings e.g. coaching, job rotation and project exposure and overseas assignments to large projects such as Battersea in London.

2. TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT
Sustainability orientation is one of the seven leadership competencies that form part of the leadership training module. Three years ago, Sime Darby rolled out a mandatory group-wide Core Executive Programme for all employees from executive-level to senior vice presidents. Sustainability has been embedded as one of the curriculums in the leadership programmes, with the employees embarking on sustainable or corporate social responsibility projects, which are currently scaled to the overseas offices in Indonesia, China, Hong Kong and Thailand.

3. SUCCES SION MANAGEMENT
A rigorous succession management process has been put in place at both the division-level and at the higher group-level. A robust and transparent process is in place to identify and assess talent to ensure that the right employee is deployed to the right position at the right time. This helps to minimise disruption of business and ensures business continuity into the future.

4. REWARD AND RECOGNITION
Sime Darby has repositioned its reward strategy where the total rewards/remuneration is at the 75th percentile or near the top end of the market. Therefore, employees are provided with balanced and competitive rewards designed to drive results and encourage behaviours of high performance.

5. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT
Sime Darby has put in place a performance management framework titled Ensuring Performance Sustainability (EPS) throughout the entire organisation. EPS consists of several components; the alignment or linking of KPIs & competencies to drive change and improve performance.

Sime Darby is one of the top-notch and reputable entities in the property sector, with a proven track record in HR. I work in this organisation because it offers a better environment for work life balance, ample opportunities for learning and career advancement.

The company rewards innovation - this blends nicely with my proactive style. I like the fact that I am also given the opportunity to constantly challenge myself. Sime Darby Property provides me room for growth in order to help me achieve my career goals. I had obtained my MBA and PAP in the last 10 years while working for the company.

The working culture in this company gives me great enthusiasm and makes me look forward to going to work every day. I wholeheartedly share the company's core values. We work as a great team and I am proud to be an employee here.

I admire greatly the company's products, management philosophy and values. I see a lot of effort put into giving value-added services to employees. For example, the company has a “Talent Management Policy” which is a stepping stone for career advancement and a per diem allowance for executives like me to be an employee here.

I feel that the company does not only focus on its core business. It also places a strong emphasis in creating a warm and sustainable work ambience.

Moving forward together
As an employer of choice, Sime Darby Property is leading the way with its series of people initiatives designed to drive change and improve performance.

These include a new performance management framework and competency model, talent and succession management programmes, a new rewards philosophy, as well as learning and development programmes that address competency gaps and is aligned with the group's business direction.

Even after receiving accolades for having good people initiatives, Sime Darby Property is not resting on its laurels. We have made commendable progress but our work is far from over. This recognition will no doubt inspire us to work even harder and reinforce our mission to continue developing a high performing workforce,” declares Abd Wahab Masikan.
This chart clearly shows that while measuring engagement is a must, equal importance should also be placed on having a compelling employer brand, with a well-defined employee value proposition; developing effective leaders, through robust leadership assessment and development programmes; as well as driving a high performance culture where performance is clearly measured and rewarded through strong pay-for-performance rewards interventions.

At an overall level, significant focus should be placed on the four pillars below:

**Best Employers Themes** | **Best Employers Malaysia 2015** | **Malaysia Market Average 2015**
--- | --- | ---
High Employee Engagement | 83% | 60%
Compelling Employer Brand | 86% | 64%
Effective Leadership | 82% | 56%
High Performance Culture | 83% | 58%

**Figure 1**

**Rollout tip:** As in most internal surveys, overall engagement is just a single number that represents the whole organisation. Demographic cuts and further engagement driver analysis breakdowns will help identify specific areas for action.

**Step 3: Take Action**

The human resources (HR) function usually takes the lead in conducting the survey and developing action plans. However, it is important that management buy-in and involvement is in place from the start so that action plans do not remain on Excel spreadsheets.

Leveraging on the insights generated from the survey, full management teams should consult together and verify the issues, before deciding on the areas that should be prioritised. During implementation of action plans, 89% of best employers hold people managers accountable for driving action, compared to 77% of market average.

While it is important to place responsibility and accountability on managers, it is equally important to ensure they are fully equipped and enabled to execute. Sixty-seven per cent of best employers provide action planning training for their people managers while only 36% do so at market average.

Focus and direct involvement of managers in taking action create a positive impact on employees, as they are the ones who have a direct impact on the employees’ daily work life.

**Rollout tip:** Be pragmatic in developing action plans, get management buy-in early, and build a culture where engagement is the responsibility of every manager, not just HR.

**Step 4: Communicate**

Employees need to be clearly informed of the steps taken by the organisation that addresses their concerns in improving their overall work environment.

If concerns cannot be resolved, employees need to know the status and outcomes of their feedback. A regular communication plan roll-out using various channels for reminders and communication sessions will close the feedback loop and maintain the momentum of driving employee engagement.

**Rollout tip:** HR may sometimes be very ambitious in developing action plans, but do not always get management support in implementing.

TRUST IN ACTION

Once an organisation has gathered employee voice, generated action insights, developed action plans and communicated them, how do we know and measure its effectiveness at creating an impact on employees? Recent Aon Hewitt research shows that employees who trust their organisation to act on their feedback, have a higher level of engagement.

So when organisations conduct an engagement survey, it is critical that they act on the results. When leaders promise changes, they must follow through. We call this Trust in Action.

Best Employers have highly engaged employees, a strong and compelling employer brand, effective leadership and high performance cultures. Trust in Action scores have a direct and significant correlation with these four themes. This shows that high levels of trust in organisations contribute to whether those organisations are Best Employers. (See Figure 2.)

Trust is at the heart of employee engagement. Employees will become more trusting, if they see their leaders taking action based on the feedback provided. Leaders should respond quickly after an engagement survey, present a realistic action plan, involve employees in the solutions, hold managers accountable and monitor progress closely.

Of course, leaders themselves need to be engaged in order to engage and build trust in their teams. By taking these basic steps in measuring and improving employee engagement, with focus on effective people programmes and coupled with significant effort in building the trust of employees, organisations will put themselves on the right path on the journey to becoming a better employer.

The registration for the 2016 programme is now open. More information about this programme is available at www.bestemployersasia.com.
NURTURE PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

HOW TO AVOID MISSING GOALS AND CAREER DERAILMENT

By MORAG BARRETT
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ONE of us achieve success alone. The world of work is probably the biggest team sport any of us will ever take part in.

Yet, at times, it can feel like our co-workers are on the opposing team rather than playing on the same side and for the same company. Relationships matter.

MISMANAGED RELATIONSHIPS

When mistakes happen, goals are missed, and when careers derail, it’s not usually about a lack of competence or expertise. It’s usually about mismanaged relationships.

The quality and health of our professional relationships have a direct impact on the output of our work, our morale and motivation, and in some cases, our reputation. This is especially apparent in times of transition – when you are moving from one role to another, promoted to a new leadership level, or joining a new organisation.

While effective leaders and managers are at the heart of every successful transition, many companies still operate a “sink or swim” approach to development and don’t provide support during critical transitions. This becomes even more apparent as we move through our careers. With experience and seniority comes the (false) assumption that “you’ve been doing this long enough, you’ll work it out.” I’m sure you will, but at what cost?

SEAMLESS TRANSITION?

When it comes to success in a new role, the statistics are not pretty. Research and articles consistently report that the ramp up time for leaders moving into a new role averages six months.

Think about your last promotion, how did you prepare yourself for your new responsibilities? What support did your company provide? It is apparent that every leader will make mistakes along the way. With a little care and attention, and investment in your development, you can help transition into your new role more quickly, preventing not just a potential financial loss, but also damage to your reputation.

I spent 15 successful years in the commercial finance industry, where the focus was entirely on business strategy, the bottom-line.

Numbers ruled the day. The mantra was “It’s not personal, it’s just business.” However, what I quickly observed was that the successful companies, teams and leaders, those that not only achieved but exceeded expectations, were the ones that focused not on the numbers alone, but also on their people strategy, on cultivating winning relationships.

WINNING RELATIONSHIPS

Cultivating winning teams, employees who are engaged and pulling in one direction is not just a nice thing to have. It’s a business imperative. It’s a personal imperative. We’ve all worked with people that we dislike or find irritating and frustrating to be with. The person whose ego is so large the office has to install double doors to get their head through, the colleague who just can’t stop talking about anything but work, or someone who seems to carry the weight of the world on their shoulders and seeks to share their complaints with everyone.

On the other hand, I am sure you have experienced professional relationships that embodied the partnership approach. A colleague who went out of their way to help you to succeed, who collaborated and shared information to ensure individual and business goals were achieved. A winning workplace relationship doesn’t just “happen” by chance – and neither does an ineffective one.

Successful leaders nurture their relationships.

DO YOU NEED TO NURTURE YOUR PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS?

TAKE a minute to write down the three critical goals you must achieve in the next few months. Next to each goal, write down the names of your co-workers who can directly impact and help you succeed, or potentially undermine it.

● As you consider each person, how would you describe the health of that working relationship today?

● Is it healthy and focused on mutual success, or is it better characterised as one that is tense and more adversarial? If you realise that you are part of a relationship that isn’t as productive as you need, don’t panic. You can turn this around.

What’s the reason for why you find yourself where you are, you owe it to yourself to make the first move to effect change.

Here are four steps that will help you to cultivate winning relationships across your organisation:

1. DEVELOP

Make sure to focus on developing relationships across the organisation, the horizontal relationships with your peers, and not just the vertical relationships up and down through the company.

Seek out opportunities to get to know the people around you as people, not just at the transactional level of “can you do this for me?”. You may be surprised at just how connected you may be when you take the time to ask a few questions and listen to their response.

2. ADJUST

As you transition to new leadership levels, the advice and input you need from others will likely change. Moving to a new role or leadership level is the opportunity to re-evaluate your network.

Take the time to identify where you may need to supplement your network with advisors who can provide a different perspective. You may need to recalibrate other relationships.

For example, if you are now managing people who were your peers, don’t assume that everyone perceives the need for change in the same way as you do. Make the implicit explicit.

3. WORK

Ask for help and input from your colleagues as you may just receive a suggestion you hadn’t considered! By asking questions, your co-workers become vested in your success. Understand what you can do to help ensure your success, and share what you need and expect from others to support the goals of you and your team.

4. SHARE

In my book, I talk about the concepts of generosity and abundance, one of the four elements of an ally. The most successful people are the ones who share their network and expertise. They give more than they take.

Make introductions, share your wisdom and build a reputation for being the go-to person.

PARTING WORDS

Finally, stay in the game, and if necessary, change your game. There is so much at stake – for you and your team. To be a successful leader, remember that business is personal and relationships do matter.

Morag Barrett is the best-selling author of Cultivate: The Power of Winning Relationships and CEO of SkyTeam (www.skyteam.com), an international HR consulting and leadership development company. Morag’s experience ranges from senior executive coaching to developing leaders and teams across Europe, America and Asia. For more articles on leadership and personal development, visit www.leaderonomics.com. Send us your feedback at editor@leaderonomics.com
LESSONS FROM TAGORE

By TARA THIAGARAJAN
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In conjunction with World Poetry Day, we pay homage to one of Asia’s greatest poets, writers, and artists – Rabindranath Tagore. Not only was he the first non-European to win a Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913, he was also the only person in the world to have written national anthems for two countries, India and Bangladesh.

Tagore won the coveted Nobel Prize for Gitanjali or Song Offerings, which is a collection of poems that continue to inspire millions of individuals regardless of race, nationality, age, religion, and gender.

One particularly inspiring poem from Gitanjali is known as Song 36.

*This is my prayer to thee, my lord – strike, strike at the root of penury in my heart. Give me the strength to carry our- selves with dignity.*

**STEER AWAY FROM CORRUPTION**

In the first line, Tagore prays that he will one day be rid of the corruption inherent within his heart. As human beings, all of us are bound to have imperfections and are vulnerable to varying degrees of temptation and corruption.

This poem appears to suggest that seeking solace in spirituality can guide us away from the bad things in this world, thus striking at the root of penury inherent in all our hearts.

In our careers, we are bound to encounter situations that could lead us to committing corrupted acts such as bribery, or perhaps even adulterating products without loyal consumers knowing. This is why Tagore stresses the importance of spirituality and a strong set of morals that can help us steer us in the right direction when faced with situations that test our integrity.

**SERVICE TO OTHERS**

Yes, we all have our own lives, but we need to remember that all our lives are intertwined with those of others, which is what Tagore mentions in the third line.

This is why it is important to remember that we are all in this together and that we should help each other along the way by giving our service to others whenever they need it.

We have to show others that we care about them and that they are not alone in their hardships. Showing your support for others can make a world of a difference in how they handle difficult situations.

As leaders in the workplace, we should do our best to engage with our teammates by motivating them to do their best in their work. In order to build that drive they need to get on with work, we need to ensure that they are happy with where they are by creating a supportive environment in which they can provide their honest opinions and ideas.

**PREVERSE YOUR DIGNITY**

The main message the fourth line of the poem brings is to carry ourselves with dignity.

Having the strength to never disown the poor or bend my knees before insolent might. Give me the strength to rise above daily trifles. And give me the strength to lightly to bear my joys and sorrows.

This poem is certainly some-thing that will last in the minds of people for generations to come as it also transcends the boundaries of time.

Likewise, in our careers, it is important that we should put our foot down when we see people abusing their power in the workplace.

Not only can it help instill the value of personal growth among employees, but it will also prevent the workplace from becoming a toxic environment.

**STOP LIVING IN A BUBBLE**

In the fifth line, Tagore asks for the strength to realise that there are bigger problems that are more important than our own daily activities.

Instead of only focusing on our own day-to-day lives, we should have the clarity to be aware of more important issues that could be resolved with our help.

By contributing to society and not only focusing on our own lives, we can help to build a more progressive nation, where everyone helps each other.

With a new generation of young individuals entering the workforce, many are also aware of pressing world issues, making them want to contribute more to the world rather than just focusing on their daily work.

Nowadays, many companies are taking their corporate social responsibility initiatives to higher, more meaningful levels that contribute significantly to society rather than just fulfilling the minimum requirements.

Therefore, many employees working for companies like this can develop their careers while at the same time, give back to the community.

**CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

Song 36 is without a doubt, a classic from Tagore’s collection of his best works. It would do us all well to remember this simply worded, yet powerful poem as it rings true for all of humanity.

It is surely something that will last through generations to come as it also transcends the boundaries of time.

Tara is a lover of literature and envoys those who can beautifully string words togeth-er. She hopes that she can one day be at least half as good as a writer that Rabindranath Tagore was. To get in touch with Tara, email editor@leadero- nomics.com

By exercising our right to speak our honest opinions and ideas. It is also important to not grovel at the feet of others just because of their stature or title. We should not bow to committing corrupted acts such as bribery, or perhaps even adulterating products without loyal consumers knowing. This is why Tagore stresses the importance of spirituality and a strong set of morals that can help us steer us in the right direction when faced with situations that test our integrity.

With a new generation of young individuals entering the workforce, many are also aware of pressing world issues, making them want to contribute more to the world rather than just focusing on their daily work.

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