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THE study of ecosystems, biodiversity and interrelationships between flora and fauna has always been very fascinating, personally for me. A common example when it comes to ecosystem study is the pond, thanks to its rich variety of organisms living and interacting within it.

Besides aquatic plants like algae, you also find snails, beetles, water bugs, spiders, frogs, fish and heron in and around this body of still water. The pond is a little business world on its own, involving different stakeholders, i.e. the organisms living in it. For the pond to thrive as a healthy ecosystem, the environment needs to be conducive enough to support its biodiversity.

Each organism exists for a purpose, though it may well be to provide food for other organisms. For plants like the water lily, they provide refuge for the little fish beneath its leaves and roots. From a broad perspective, the stakeholders depend on each other for sustainability and survival. Some of them function as producers (the plants), others as primary consumers (herbivores), secondary consumers (carnivores), etc.

WHAT’S WITH THE POND?

In fierce unhealthy business competitions, if you get rid of the “plants”, the rest of the “consumers” will eventually be wiped out too. And the ecosystem of the business becomes as good as dead. Once, my colleagues were discussing an advertorial where an organisation only wanted to showcase photos of their successful projects.

We opined that photos of their direct stakeholders ought to be featured too, because it is a simple principle of “no dedicated people, no successful projects”.

> CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

As pointed out in Mapping Our Stakeholders’ Universe, article by Joseph Tan, before you identify who your stakeholder is, you need to be clear of your organisation’s universe.

Only then, are you able to take intentional steps to learn to acknowledge the efforts of these stakeholders. For big companies who have already made it thus far, don’t rest on your laurels for too long. Instead, continue to be innovative and constantly adaptable to various business environments.

Take heed the following wise words from Lost, a Coldplay song: "You might be a big fish, in a little pond; doesn’t mean you’ve won; ‘Cause along come may; a bigger one; and you’ll be lost.”

A BALANCED ECOSYSTEM

What happens in the natural also happens in a business environment. In today’s challenging corporate business variables, no company can survive in isolation. The success or failure of an organisation depends on the network of collaborators and mutual symbiotic relationships with other stakeholders, including those of your competitors.

The success or failure of an organisational ecosystem study is the pond, thanks to its rich variety of organisms living and interacting within it.

...and interrelationships between flora and fauna has always been very fascinating, personally for me.
Insecurity is a prerequisite for humility.

By JOSEPH TAN
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When Wendy Kopp started Teach for America, she had to collaborate with all sorts of intimidating parties – the school principals, the corporate leaders, the college heads – in the quest of getting graduating seniors to commit their first two years to teach in poor community schools. Along the way, she was laughed at and made fun of but she persevered and remained humble. Eventually those who were her challenging intimidators are now her biggest supporters and collaborators. What caused the shift?

Of course, we do not go out of our way to look for intimidating people. However, life is such that when you have a worthwhile quest, you will definitely have your share of naysayers and those will impose their negativity on your ideas and plans. Nevertheless, these intimidating parties may turn out to be your strongest supporters later on. The key is your ability to stay committed and resolute to your vision. In a way, your vision has to be bigger than your ego – this is the key to inner resolve that will help you weather through your dealings with intimidating collaborators.

From this perspective, the forward-thinking CEO should consider the following sources of “incompatibility” in his or her network in order to stimulate breakthrough results:

- Vendors or even competitors with emerging technologies.
- Existing partnerships in different fields to create cross-fertilisation of ideas.
- Clients who could end up being potential stakeholders.

Collaborating within the network of “intimidation”

When it comes to collaboration, the easier tendency is to work with those of whom I can control and command. But what about other organisations and partners that are bigger and more “intimidating”?

Case study: When Wendy Kopp started Teach for America, she had to collaborate with all sorts of intimidating parties – the school principals, the corporate leaders, the college heads – in the quest of getting graduating seniors to commit their first two years to teach in poor community schools. Along the way, she was laughed at and made fun of but she persevered and remained humble. Eventually those who were her challenging intimidators are now her biggest supporters and collaborators. What caused the shift?

Success is a funny thing – once you have it, then it becomes your greatest source of complacency, your source of security. That is the reason why, according to Andrew Grove, former CEO of Intel – a healthy dose of paranoia is needed to keep you and your organisation on its toes.

The best type of destruction to your business is the type which you impose upon yourself – rather than allowing competitors to obsolete your products and services, why not act from a position of insecurity and destroy your own business in favour of a better one?

Not many CEOs have this drive of “insecurity” to make that happen because we are naturally creatures of comfort and predictability.

The insecure CEO is one who lives on the edge of paranoia – constantly looking for ways to collaborate and network with those who are seemingly incompatible and intimidating and yet, as iron sharpens iron – the result is unmistakably clear – working from a position of insecurity and comfort does not push us over the edge of excellence, innovation and breakthrough performance.

It is not the “sameness” of your network of collaborators that will provide the competitive advantage, rather it is the diversity of your network which will reap a harvest of significant results. Only the paranoid survive – embrace your insecurities because it will keep you humble and hungry.
Worst mistakes you can ever make at work

By Dr Travis Bradberry
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Of TalentSmart, the world’s leading provider of emotional intelligence tests and training, serving more than 75% of Fortune 500 companies. His bestselling books have been translated into 25 languages and are available in more than 150 countries. Bradberry has written for, or been covered by, Newsweek, BusinessWeek, Fortune, Forbes, Fast Company, Inc, USA Today, The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post, and The Harvard Business Review.

1. BACKSTABBING

The name says it all. Stabbing your colleagues in the back, intentionally or otherwise, is a huge source of strife in the workplace. One of the most frequent forms of backstabbing is going over someone’s head to solve a problem. People typically do this in an attempt to avoid conflict, but they end up creating even more conflict as soon as the victim feels the blade. Anytime you make someone look bad in the eyes of their colleagues, it feels like a stab in the back, regardless of your intentions.

2. GOSSIPING

People make themselves look terrible when they get carried away with gossiping about other people. Wallowing in talk of other people’s misdeeds or misfortunes may end up hurting their feelings if the gossip finds its way to them, but gossiping will make you look negative and spiteful every time, guaranteed.

3. TAKING CREDIT FOR SOMEONE ELSE’S WORK

We’ve all experienced that stomach-dropping feeling that happens when you discover that someone has stolen your idea. Taking credit for someone else’s work, no matter how small, creates the impression that you haven’t accomplished anything significant on your own. Stealing credit also shows that you have zero regard for your team and your working relationships.

4. HAVING AN EMOTIONAL HIJACKING

My company provides 360-degree feedback and executive coaching, and we come across far too many instances of people throwing things, screaming, making people cry, and other telltale signs of an emotional hijacking. An emotional hijacking demonstrates low emotional intelligence, and it’s an easy way to get fired. As soon as you show that level of instability, people will question whether or not you’re trustworthy and capable of keeping it together when it counts. Exploding at anyone, regardless of how much they might “deserve it,” turns a huge amount of negative attention your way. You’ll be labeled as unstable, unapproachable, and intimidating. Controlling your emotions keeps you in the driver’s seat. When you are able to control your emotions around someone who wrongs you, they end up looking bad instead of you.

5. ANNOUNCING THAT YOU HATE YOUR JOB

The last thing anyone wants to hear at work is someone complaining about how much they hate their job. Doing so labels you as a negative person and brings down the morale of the group. Bosses are quick to catch on to naysayers who drag down morale, and they know that there are always enthusiastic replacements waiting just around the corner.

6. BRAGGING

When someone hits a home run and starts gloating as they run the bases, it’s safe to assume that they haven’t hit very many home runs. On the other hand, if they hit a home run and simply run the bases, it conveys a business-as-usual mentality, which is far more intimidating to the other team. Accomplishing great things without bragging about them demonstrates the same strong mentality—it shows people that succeeding isn’t unusual to you.

7. TELLING LIES

So many lies begin with good intentions—people want to protect themselves or someone else—but lies have a tendency to grow and spread until they’re discovered, and once everyone knows that you’ve lied, there’s no taking it back.

8. EATING SMELLY FOOD

Unless you happen to work on a ship, your colleagues are going to mind if you make the entire place smell like day-old fish. The general rule of thumb when it comes to food at work is, anything with an odour that might waft beyond the kitchen door should be left at home. It might seem like a minor thing, but smelly food is inconconsiderate and distracting—and so easily avoidable. When something that creates discomfort for other people is so easily avoided, it tends to build resentment quick. Your pungent lunch tells everyone that you just don’t care about them, even when you do.

9. BURNING BRIDGES

So much of work revolves around the people you meet and the connections you make. Dropping an atomic bomb on any professional relationship is a major mistake. One of TalentSmart’s clients is a large chain of coffee shops. They have a relatively high turnover rate; so when a barista quits, it isn’t usually taken personally. One barista, however, managed to burn every single bridge he had in a single day. The surprising thing is that she didn’t yell or do anything extreme; all she did was leave. Without warning, she showed up to her Monday shift, told the store manager she was quitting (she had found a better-paying job somewhere else), and walked out. The result, of course, was that every shift that she was scheduled to work for the next two weeks had to be done with one less person, as she provided no time to find a replacement.

She most likely saw her actions as being offensive only to the manager (whom she didn’t like), but in reality, she created two miserable weeks for everyone who worked at the shop. She ruined her otherwise positive connections, with every single one of her colleagues.

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

These behaviours sound extreme and highly inconsiderate, but they have a tendency to sneak up on you. A gentle reminder is a great way to avoid them completely.
A BRIGHTER FUTURE REQUIRES HR ENTREPRENEURS

SWAPPING BEST PRACTICE FOR THE BOTTOM LINE

BY CHRIS ROEBUCK
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Business savvy” for some in human resources (HR) is likely to be a shock. Many HR practitioners still adopt the paternalistic approach; that they know best and that line management must be trained to conform to HR “best practices” or risk minimisation.

After all, we know better what HR needs, don’t we?

Even for those who accept the principle of “business savvy”, everyone assumes they are already getting it right. “Oh yes, of course I understand my organisation!”

That’s like saying you know Airbus makes planes, therefore you know what kind of HR support that Airbus needs.

That’s absurd but it’s not far off the knowledge level that some in HR have of their organisations’ activities.

Further assessment of the benefit delivered by HR is often done by HR people, not those on the receiving end. Never forget the principle that beauty lies is in the eye of the beholder, not the giver!

BUSINESS SAVVY ORGANISATION

Business savvy is about delivering a level of capability that matches what the organisation wants. In other words, meeting client needs rather than just delivering products.

But doesn’t the business partner model do this already? In theory, maybe, but in reality, sadly not.

Even those using the business partner model must significantly adapt it to ensure “business savvy” elements are in place to deliver organisational performance improvement.

Key elements are:

1. A focus on business-driven prioritisation.
2. Alignment to key strategic objectives.
3. Delivery with clarity and simplicity.
4. HR must take a proactive, not reactive, approach as a key part of the business, and not be viewed as a separate ‘partner’ or advisor.

In reality, chief executive officers don’t really care about HR’s best practices: they just want the best bottom line. HR must reflect this by thinking and delivering in an innovative business-driven perspective, not a traditional risk-averse HR process or a legacy-driven one.

HR must think about long-term sustainability, not short-term fixes.

To be business savvy, we must therefore be HR entrepreneurs, not just business partners.

NEED FOR HR ENTREPRENEURS

The HR entrepreneur is an individual, at any level or location in HR, who has good professional HR knowledge.

The person also has critical “business savvy” capability via:

1. Good core business knowledge, e.g. project management and customer service.
2. Understanding of operational activity – nearly as well as the line managers they support.
3. Understanding of the wider organisation and its strategic objectives, maybe even better than the line manager – so if the line manager diverges from these, the HR entrepreneur can help bring them back on track.
4. Understanding of the environment and market within which the business operates.
5. Constantly looking outward and benchmarking the organisation, not just against last year’s performance but against peers and possibly best-in-class standards.
6. Demonstrates an innovative and entrepreneurial mindset to.

Be proactive in identifying ways to drive better business performance (not just HR) by looking for opportunities to improve external delivery.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

As business savvy HR entrepreneurs, we must focus on outcomes – not roles, titles, or process for process’ sake.

Everyone in HR has to think as an entrepreneur, accurately assessing the situation, innovating, being flexible and taking managed risk to drive better business bottom line.

There is no “best practice”, only the “best current outcome” and this will vary between situations, organisations and times. This matches service delivery to organisational need.

If we can start to achieve this, “business savvy” will spread and help HR achieve the credibility it deserves.

Suggest initiatives that deliver maximum ROI (return of investment) for minimum resource and manage risk effectively by simplifying processes where possible.

Focus on delivering what the organisation needs strategically to sustainably improve for the future.

A report from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, Business Savvy: Giving HR the Edge, was released in 2012 and it focuses on the need for HR leaders and practitioners to harness a deep understanding of and engagement with the wider business.

This change to “business savvy” mindset and approach is important. Line managers do not have HR savvy, so they don’t know how you can help, so “business savvy” enables HR to support the most appropriate support rather than standard “best practice”.

Further, it matches the development of the entrepreneurial leader within world class organisations, where a new proactive, innovative and flexible approach to business leadership is being seen.

However, the HR entrepreneur can function, even without the line being entrepreneurial. HR entrepreneurs can also be a catalyst to help develop entrepreneurial line management.

Any HR person on any level can be an HR entrepreneur. The HR entrepreneur’s single objective is to support the maximisation of organisational performance; that must be the benchmark for all activity.

So, entrepreneurial HR principles have to be applied everywhere, in both transactional and transformational HR activity.

We must also be prepared to remove HR activity that does not add optimum value to the organisation, even if it is seen as a “best practice”.

Research shows that the complexity involved in delivering objectives and managing risk has significant cost and impact on engagement. Thus over-complexity in HR is a risk to organisational performance.
After years of working in academia, I saw it from a very different point of view. For my first few years of work, I worked with patients in the hospital, and later, on the staff, I was excited to see the rollout, meet the project 100%.

As part of the project implementation team, I was involved in the rollout, which involved the various stakeholders. In the latter years of peer influence, “writes Dr Sum. “In her book Intentional Parenting, Baron) works well.

The importance of understanding stakeholder analysis

WHATS AT STAKE HERE?

The importance of stakeholder analysis

Too Good to be True?

After years of working in academia, I saw it from a very different point of view. For my first few years of work, I worked with patients in the hospital, and later, on the staff, I was excited to see the rollout, meet the project 100%.

As part of the project implementation team, I was involved in the rollout, which involved the various stakeholders. In the latter years of peer influence, “writes Dr Sum. “In her book Intentional Parenting, Baron) works well.
**Dining in China, First Impressions Count – especially at the dining table**

By C.K. Wong  
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**Dining Etiquette**

Why is the dining session so important there?

A Chinese chief executive officer from China once told me this, “I never really had a full meal with business associates after I got involved in negotiations, because meal time with them means business.”

Don’t get me wrong. Of course a dining session is a great way to socialise and build business networks.

Practically, it’s impossible for us to ascertain correct directions either. So, the host should be sitting in a spot where he/she can see you, a potential business partner, and also the other guests in the dining session.

The Chinese host usually sits facing east after 100m. Remembering the “go straight and turn left after 100m”, we know that the host is having thoughts of harmony, friendship, perfection, and so on. Even though the table is round, you will still need to find out the right seating direction and position.

The Chinese host usually sits facing an easterly direction, because the dining table is like a strong ancient house that is built facing south, and is referred to as “南向 (nán xiàng)”.

Don’t get me wrong. Of course a dining session is a great way to socialise and build business networks.

Dinner is a great way for them to observe for greed or selfishness. They will think of you as overly cautious to yourself. If you always select the small peanuts, they will think of you as overly cautious and not as bold in making certain decisions. To them, this type of person may be good as a worker but not really cut out for random peanuts: they will find you to be a business partner. However, if you go for random peanuts: they will find you easy-going – both good as a friend and as a potential business partner.

Concluding Thoughts

Nonetheless, whether a business collaboration falls through or is secured, the outcome is also affected by other conventional factors such as your capability, adaptability to local culture and so on. However, this first dining impression does serve as an important reference for doing business in China. So, don’t take any chances of losing by a peanut!
The Key To Greatness
Don’t Think Your Dreams Are Over

By DINESH DORAI RAJ
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A quick look at the words on the cover page of Jonathan Yabut’s book caused my enthusiasm to surge. The words were – Winner, Grit and Great.

“To every dreamer out there, know that you can never be too small to dream big,” was the line that struck me as I flipped through the book entitled From Grit to Great, forcing me to grab a seat and settle down to read the book. We all want to be great, but are we prepared to practise grit? Probably not. The book simply demonstrates how the latter leads to the former.

Throughout the book, Yabut explains in simple language the journey of his life which has led to his success today.

NEVER TOO SMALL TO DREAM BIG

Yabut speaks of his journey from humble beginnings. Despite facing financial constraints, his parents hoped to put him in a private school. Yabut realised his parents’ dream at a young age by securing financial assistance due to his excellent grades. However, pressure continued to mount as he needed to maintain his good results and he ranked among the top students annually to retain the 100% scholarship.

It was then that Yabut was diagnosed with a cyst on his chest, which frightened him to such an extent that he started preparing for his worst. Thankfully the cyst was benign. But since then, carpe diem has become his philosophy of life. He decided to stay true to himself, conquering every dream in mind.

THE JOURNEY TO BECOMING ASIA’S APPRENTICE

Preparation is the key to everything. Yabut stresses that anything that succeeds without it, is simply called luck.

“Rome wasn’t built overnight and so are the rest of the challenges you will face in life,” was one of the lines in the book that jolted me to start preparing for my worst. Yabut explains the endless preparation that was involved in winning The Apprentice Asia. It all started from the time of application and the flow of truth as he explained it – preparation breeds familiarity, familiarity breeds confidence, and confidence breeds success. Then comes the commonly heard phrase – work smart, not just hard.

Corporate folks and students would not deny that they are guilty of the “working hard” when the expected output totally differs. Yabut also brings up a few simple life experiences as lessons that may speed up our tasks as compared to “old school” techniques, thus allowing us to spend more time with family, friends and ourselves.

I remember following The Apprentice Asia on AXN very closely, yet I failed to see the bigger picture represented there. The reality show was a marathon, not a sprint. As mentioned in the book – never miss the forest for the trees – so take a step back when needed and reassess the strategy.

GRIT TO GREAT

Would you believe it that the winner of The Apprentice Asia was on the verge of quitting the show? What would have happened if he had quit?

He would have had no chance of winning. Instead of throwing in the towel, Yabut persisted and he practised grit. He pushed himself out of his comfort zone and fought through the battle and he won.

We all know that the great leaders of today did not attain overnight success, but succeeded after many years of hard work, while overcoming challenges and obstacles along their way.

It was indeed an honour that Yabut dedicated a section of his book to share his story. Having survived a horrific road accident and now learning to walk again, the experience itself calls for sheer grit.

The practice of grit has made me defy the odds that was presented before me, when even the doctors deemed that I would never walk again. Being on crutches and still unrelentingly persevering, I still believe I will walk unaided one day.

HACKING THE CORPORATE WORLD, APPRENTICE STYLE

Yabut reveals some important hidden truths to those who think they are ready to conquer the corporate world after watching the reality show.

He brings up the importance of leadership that develops and builds a credible, strong team. In reality, this is one of the most vital keys in the corporate world for anyone who aspires to make it big out there.

Yabut also stresses the practices and habits that need to be embedded in us. These include tips for stress-free business travel, handling work emails (first world problem as most of us are often overwhelmed by them), and meeting deadlines.

Yabut relates them to the experiences he has had in life. They really leave an impression as we read them because he has had in life. They really leave an impression as we read them because they are very much relatable to what we face daily in the corporate world.

WRAPPING UP

Sipping my last bit of coffee and flipping the final page of the book, I asked myself a question, “Can I be like Yabut?” I had a simple answer at the back of my head, “Grit to Great.”

Wrapping up, this book is an easy read for just about anyone, ranging from teenagers to corporate leaders out there.

It’s a book where business meets will inspire readers to make it big and be successful. Here are two key takeaways for me:

- success requires hard work
- whilst there is no short cut to success, there is always a space for innovation to run faster.

WHAT IS GRIT?

In May 2013, teacher-turned-psychologist Angela Lee Duckworth presented a Ted Talk on The key to success: Grit.

In her own words, grit is:

- passion and perseverance for very long-term goals
- having stamina
- sticking with your future, day in, day out, not just for the week, not just for the month, but for years, and working really hard to make that future a reality
- living life like it’s a marathon, not a sprint.

To check out your Grit Scale, complete the test here: http://tinyurl.com/666h7k

To every dreamer out there, know that you can never be too small to dream big. To connect with him, you can email him at editor@leaderonomics.com.
RISE OF THE DIGITAL ERA

By CINDY YAP
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THE invasion of e-commerce sites such as Zalora, Lazada, Home24 and Foodpanda began in Malaysia late 2013, fronted by the Samwer brothers who are the founders of Rocket Internet.

The Leaderonomics Show meets up with Italian-born Luca Barberis, the managing director who spearheads the top fashion e-commerce site in Malaysia, Zalora.

Previously the director of marketing, Barberis was appointed managing director of Zalora Malaysia in December 2014, with a remarkable track record which spans a number of countries.

He has had an impressive stint with Google as an industry analyst and subsequently Google’s account manager where he managed a US$6mil/quarter portfolio of businesses (from start-ups to large enterprises) which involved advising customers on digital advertising and their online business strategy.

Since taking the helm of the largest and fastest growing fashion-focused e-commerce site in South-East Asia, Barberis has been working in a super-fast paced environment.

Barberis offers, “There are long hours, but it offers work-life balance and a fun environment.”

With almost 300 people in the Malaysian team now, including the warehouse, marketing and production teams, Barberis explains that in the past one year, the team grew by more than 100 persons. In terms of revenue, it recorded a very healthy growth exceeding 100%.

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL CHALLENGES

Sharing on the external challenges faced, Barberis says, “The main challenge is in building corporate partnerships with the big players in Malaysia. We are strong when we work with partners like Samsung or Digi, although negotiations for the best deal usually takes a significant bit of time.”

Nonetheless, Barberis opines that it is the best channel to reach out to Malaysians and works even better than paid advertising with Google or on billboards.

“Corporate partnerships such as promotions, exclusive fashion shows and leveraging on different brands have really proven to be the best strategy we adopted in 2014,” he continues.

Internally, the challenge is to keep the growth balanced with the organisation. “Growing too fast may result in the warehouse not delivering as fast as it should, thus stressing the customer service. The key is to keep the growth fast, but not too extreme so the organisation can keep up to this speed,” he insists.

BEING PART OF SOMETHING SIGNIFICANT

Barberis studied economics, accounting, finance and law but pursued a career in the digital arena instead. An ambition to make a difference and do something significant motivated his career diversion.

“When I graduated, I pondered that in the next five to 10 years I wanted to do something memorable which will end up in the books of economics history, regardless of how much money I can make,” he recalls.

There were two big trends happening then which were inter-related, i.e. the internet and globalisation.

“I chose not only to work in the internet but in emerging economies, in particular South-East Asia – one of the fastest growing economies in the world,” he muses, thinking that going where the speed is would expedite his career growth.

LEAVING A GOOGLE DREAM

Barberis was 25 when he chose to leave Italy due to the high unemployment rate for youngsters and the local business environment which was not robust.

After he landed a dream job in sales at Google which exposed him to various consumer behaviour and businesses as an insider behind the walls of Google, Barberis went from zero to an expert in the digital economy within six months.

WHY QUIT THEN?

“Google is a big, extremely profitable corporation with a fantastic corporate culture, where employees have a lot of perks and have an easy life,” he admits. However, after some years, he felt the desire for change and doing something more.

“Generally, if you aspire to create an impact, see ideas get executed, fast growth, while having fun at work, working in a rocketing trend company like Zalora is definitely a better opportunity,” he raves.

IDEAL LEADERSHIP

Barberis insists that managers who understand the business, have fantastic ideas, great vision and are extremely good with numbers may not be the best when it comes to execution. On the other hand, some are fantastic at execution, very efficient, fast and well-organised, but may lack the big picture, vision and creativity to inspire the team to grow fast.

He opines that work leadership in a fast-growth environment entails the ability to strike the right balance between having vision and execution.

He also stresses that the idea of leadership and expectations of a leader differs based on location. In Zalora, Barberis adopts the North European management and leadership style, mainly due to its German influence.

“The key difference in leadership style in Europe is countries in the South like Italy and Spain are similar to Asia, whereby authority and titles are very important. Whereas in North Europe, people are more easygoing and happier to share,” he claims.

“Generally, Asians are shy to share their thoughts and not so comfortable with disagreeing with the boss.

“But overall, it’s improving thanks to globalisation. The younger generation tends to be a little bit cheekier, more arrogant and less shy. In business, a bit of arrogance and the “I don’t-trust-you-just-because-you-are-the-boss” attitude is a good thing for better performance in certain roles,” he remarks.

At the end of the day, open discussion is required to agree on what to do and how to do it, whereas authority comes in simply to close things in a quick way.

Here are Barberis’s tips for a sharp mind and to keep the creative juices flowing:

1. E-mail management: No replying to the same emails until 2pm to 3pm, in order to focus on what needs to be done.

2. No Facebook-ing: In terms of managing the general flow of busy-ness, Barberis chooses to avoid the main trigger of Facebook, i.e. boredom by ceasing to login to Facebook on the day he started Zalora.

For 2015, Luca aims to keep up Zalora’s astonishing growth shown in 2014, which attributes to the extremely well executed marketing activities.

Below are snippets of Barberis’s response in The Thinkonomics segment:

1. Is the world better with or without reality shows?

With giving people what they like, especially good and simple entertainment would overall make the world a better place. Instead of merely studying and working hard, people need pleasure. Apparently, reality shows are one of the best options.

2. If Steve Jobs and Bill Gates did not exist, would the world be a better place today?

I think someone else would have done exactly the same.

Individuals are important, but not as important as trends, such as software, cool design hardware or perfectly designed products. Although we had smartphones since the end of the 1990s, people started using smartphones only when Jobs came up with the iPhone, I think this trend would have happened anyway, albeit a few years later.

The people who surfed these trends are smarter people, but the control and power of a single person is, in my opinion, relatively limited.

3. What would your life be like without the internet?

I cannot even imagine. I’m in that generation who always had the Internet since high school.

4. Probably I would be unemployed, a lawyer or a banker. Definitely a more boring life.
DREAM

BIG BABY

IF YOUR DREAMS DON’T SCARE YOU, THEY ARE NOT BIG ENOUGH

KEEP STEPPING

The next step is to create constant reminders along the way. Here’s a good tip on how to remember new items in your daily activity: pair them with things you already remember. If there’s something you need to bring along with you the next day, you can put it together with your wallet or your keys.

By doing that, even if you’ve forgotten about them in your sleep, when you’re about to go out and reach for the wallet and keys, you’ll see them and be reminded on your way out.

So, in terms of the dream, put relevant key reminders in places that you are bound to see, for example, on your work table where you are at most of your time, or in a notebook that you always carry.

What’s even better is if you can share it with a friend, and it can be a topic of discussion when you meet.

Having someone ask questions about your dreams and how you ought to get there gives you more opportunities to think of different alternatives that you might have missed out.

ALL SHALL BE REVEALED

In DIODE camps, we start with teaching our campers about the AVP Leadership model. For this article’s focus, I’ll touch more on “V” which stands for Vision, or in this case, our dream.

We give our camp participants a very simple AVP report that helps them discover their own dreams, and they write it down on paper for their reference.

They answer questions such as “describe your vision in detail” and “describe how you would measure the success of your vision”. Just these two questions alone takes quite some time because youths usually have dreams about being the best in something, but they never get the opportunity to find out how they are going to measure the success of their own dream.

After they answer those two questions, the facilitators help them break it down into smaller goals to what they need to achieve in 24 hours, the first week, the first month, the second month and the third month. This helps them plan achievable, short term goals that contribute to their end goal.

Just doing these few things help campers gain confidence in achieving their dreams. We encourage them to bring their raw and abstract dreams to us.

All we do is provide a structure for them. As they commit to putting it down on paper with specific measurable instances, they begin to see that their dream is one step closer to the reality they are in.

IN CONCLUSION

Dreams are important and they are usually the first step towards what would become a vision. No matter what your belief is, whether dreams are a collection of memories of what is seen, a creation or imagination of what someone has spoken to us, or something divine that we may have never experienced before, in truth a dream remains only a reality in the recesses of our minds and imagination.

A vision requires actual work, tears, sweat and sometimes even blood. A vision subjects itself to the reality of this world, with physics, economics and law. It requires actual interaction and trust towards people who we believe can help us achieve that dream.

Sometimes things work out our way, and sometimes they won’t. I truly believe, while the brave usually take the first step towards their dreams, it is the faithful who translate that dream into a vision that impacts themselves and the people around them.
What I Learned From My Mother

I learned from my mother how to love the living, to have plenty of races on hand in case you have to rush to the hospital with penicillin cut from the lawn, black ants still stuck to the bade. I learned to save jars large enough to hold fruit salad for a whole grieving household, to cube home-canned pears and peaches, to slice through maroon grape skins and flick out the sexual seeds with a knife point. I learned to attend viewings even if I didn’t know the deceased, to press the moist hands of the living, to look in their eyes and offer sympathy, as though I understood less even then. I learned that whatever we say means nothing, what anyone will remember is that we came. I learned to believe I had the power to ease awful pains materially like an angel. Like a doctor, I learned to create from another’s suffering my own usefulness, and once you know how to do this, you can never refuse. To every house you enter, you must offer healing: a chocolate cake you baked yourself, the blessing of your voice, your chaste touch.

— Julia Kasdorf, Sleeping Preacher