I have a great deal to be thankful for in life, but I do regret not being more active in team sports in school. I swam, played tennis, and had the occasional run-in with a football (but that was more comedic than it was athletic!). My father was a serious badminton and table tennis player, and I saw how the discipline and perseverance he must have developed from young translated into his work life. More importantly, my father stressed “sportsmanship” – something I hardly ever hear people talk about these days – perhaps because even in team sports, the focus appears to be on the individual rather than the team.

This week, in conjunction with SEA Games 2015, we look at how sports as well as the behind-the-scenes unsung heroes, contribute to the development of leaders, young and old(er).

Marshall Goldsmith likens leadership to a contact sport – addressing the canundrum of how leaders themselves can continue growing, while focusing also on developing the next generation of leaders.

Bouncing in next, Nedim Karaevli revisits the role of team sports in building young leaders, and how team sports can be an important and welcome activity at the workplace. For those who aren’t quite ready to don the stone for children in competition.

Later on, coaches and other professionals may find it useful to think about how the Maplewood Park Games have physical prowess and mental strength, but beyond any doubt, they have been gifted with the right people in their lives. They did not arrive in Singapore by themselves.

Onward, upward!

KAREN NEOH
Editor
leaderonomics.com

THE SEASON IS HERE!

The young men and women proudly representing their countries at the SEA Games have physical prowess and mental strength, but beyond any doubt, they have been gifted with the right people in their lives. They did not arrive in Singapore by themselves.

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THE SEASON IS HERE!
Leadership is a Contact Sport

By MARSHALL GOLDSMITH
editor@leaderonomics.com

My career as an executive coach began many years ago with a phone call from the chief executive officer (CEO) of a Fortune 100 company. I had just given a leadership clinic to the CEOs human resources (HR) department.

This is what I was doing in the late 1980s – advising HR departments about identifying future leaders in their companies and creating programmes to form them into better leaders.

The CEO had attended the session and from what I’d said he thought I might be able to help him with a vice-president (VP) who, though smart, dedicated, motivated, hardworking, and creative, was also a stubborn, opinionated, know-it-all. I was intrigued by this challenge.

I had coached many groups of mid-level managers who were on the verge of success, but never an individual who was already very successful and needed to make a change to be blast-ed into the stratosphere.

I took the job – and I took it on a pay-for-results basis. If the VP improved, I’d get paid and if not, I told the CEO I’d fire him.

That was a couple of decades ago, and I did get paid. Since then I’ve worked with more than 150 CEOs and their management teams.

My job isn’t to make anyone smarter or richer. It’s to help people identify a personal habit that’s annoying their co-workers and to help them eliminate it so that they retain their value to the organisation.

And to help them develop their people as well, because you see, without their colleagues, their people and teams, these leaders, as successful as they might be, would have no one to lead.

LEADER DEVELOPMENT: CRUCIAL TASK

Developing as a leader is a difficult endeavour. If you’re reading this article you can probably relate to it.

Demands on leaders are increasing, meaning there is less time for focusing on change.

The catch is that as more is expected of you as a leader, the less time you have for development, and yet improving your leadership skills is more important than ever. It’s a tricky situation.

With limited time, you have to learn on the job. You have to make the most of your surroundings and ask those around you for help. You have to enlist their support as you do your best to develop yourself, your people, and your teams – even them!

It’s not easy, but I’ve developed a leadership development model that has now proven to work with thousands and thousands of people.

CONCLUSION

This simple model for leadership development works! If you want to get better, at work or at home, try it for yourself and see.

If I can help you consider the possibility that despite all of your success to date, you might have some things that you can change to be “even better”, then I will have done my job.

LEADERS DO MORE THAN THE OBVIOUS

Are CEOs ready to lead top companies? What differentiated companies before, have become the norm today. For companies to keep raising the bar, our leaders have to be “engaging leaders” that go above and beyond to create leaders that go above and beyond to create an environment conducive for nurturing leaders of tomorrow.

Source: Great Leaders Go Beyond The Obvious 2015, Aon Hewitt

For more information, email editor@leaderonomics.com

GREAT LEADERS GO BEYOND THE OBVIOUS

WHAT DIFFERENTIATES TOP COMPANIES? GOING FROM GOOD TO GREAT

A recent study by Aon Hewitt – Top Companies for Leaders, found that what characterised these top companies in the past, including competencies, organisational values, accelerated learning programmes, engagement dashboards, diversity scorecards, are no longer distinguishing factors.

Leading companies that went beyond the obvious took six differentiating key strides (please see the diagram).

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8-STEP LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT MODEL

This model is just eight steps:

1. ASK
   Ask people “How can I be a better manager/partner/team member?”

2. LISTEN
   Listen to their answers.

3. THINK
   Think about their input. What does it mean?

4. THANK
   Thank people for sharing the valuable feedback with you.

5. RESPOND
   Respond positively when receiving input.

6. INVOLVE
   Involve the people around you to support your change efforts.

7. CHANGE
   Change isn’t an academic exercise. Act on what you learn.

8. FOLLOW-UP
   Follow-up regularly and stakeholders will notice the positive actions you’re taking based on their input.
THE ROLE OF TEAM SPORTS AT WORK

People expect former student-athletes to display significantly more leadership, self-confidence, and self-respect than those who were active outside of sports. Men who participated in high school sports an average of 60 years old and seniors reported that sport may play an important role in late-in-life outcomes. The study findings:

- People expect former student-athletes to display significantly more leadership, self-confidence, and self-respect than those who were active outside of sports.
- Men who participated in high school sports an average of 60 years old and seniors reported that sport may play an important role in late-in-life outcomes.
- Sports activities can be transferred to daily work. Staying connected with your team also helps build your support system. Yes it is possible to build lasting friendships at work!

PRODUCTIVITY: PHYSICAL AND MENTAL AGILITY

There are obvious health benefits of regular sports activity – improving fitness, as well as building endurance, developing concentration and increasing self-discipline.

Swedish researchers found that a sports programme at work increases productivity (Journal of Occupational & Environmental Medicine, 2021), and results from another study suggest that sport may play an important role in stress management intervention programmes at work.

TEAM WORK: BREAKING BOUNDARIES

Through sports activities at work, we don’t just get a chance to meet people from different functions or departments we usually don’t work with, we also become united with a common goal to perform well as a team. The perseverance, being a good team player and positive attitude of accepting defeat that one learns from sports activities can be transferred to daily work. Staying connected with your team also helps build your support system. Yes it is possible to build lasting friendships at work!

WALKING MEETINGS AND THE IMPACT ON CREATIVITY

Remember how we used to crave having classes or lectures outside rather than being confined to classrooms? Managers can step up their game by stepping out for meetings! Having walking meetings are becoming increasingly popular with Mark Zuckerberg and Barack Obama reportedly being big fans of it. One study found that “Walking opens up the free flow of ideas, and it is a simple and robust solution to the goals of increasing creativity and increasing physical activity” (Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition).

So walk and talk while you walk the talk!

MAKING IT HAPPEN!

Managers and organisations can play a role in creating a healthy work environment.

1. Start sports teams which can take part in workplace challenges internally and against other companies. Basketball for example, can be played by people of all ages and abilities – so no one needs to feel left out.
2. Come one, come all! Younger employees can demonstrate their leadership by taking the initiative to organise activities – further developing their own leadership skills, as well as confidence and self-esteem.

IS NEGATIVE THINKING BAD FOR YOUR BRAIN?

Scientists seem to think that it is. Researchers at King’s College London found that repetitive negative thinking may increase your risk for Alzheimer’s disease (Journal of Alzheimer’s Disease). Remember, at this time there is no cure for Alzheimer’s, so this deserves your attention. The study found that a habit of prolonged negative thinking diminishes your brain’s ability to think, reason, and form memories, essentially draining your brain’s resources. Another study reported in the Journal of American Academy of Neurology found that cynical thinking also produces a greater dementia risk. Scientists refer to this as quantum Zeno effect.

When you do this, neuroplasticity starts to be good at what they do. Negative thoughts create “channels” in your brain. This way of thinking can become your default. If you do a lot of negative thinking, your brain wires to be good at producing negative thoughts. Your brain also gets good at seeing things to think negatively about.

One of the byproducts of negative thinking is stress, which then leads to more negative thinking.

A ‘SURE FIRE’ STRESS BUSTER

Here’s a suggestion: When negative thoughts come, and they will, don’t just ignore them. Pay attention. Stop what you are doing. Close your eyes if you need to. Replace the negative thought with a positive thought. Hold the positive thought in your brain for a full minute, or more. When you do this, neuroplasticity starts to work in your favour. The two keys are attention density, and holding the thought long enough for your brain to begin to create new “channels”. Scientists refer to this as quantum Zeno effect.

YOU BECOME A SCULPTOR OF YOUR OWN BRAIN. HOW COOL IS THAT?

A good book to read on self-directed neuropsychopharmacy is You Are Not Your Brain by Jeffrey Schwartz. When you change your habits of mind, your life changes.

Tom Hopkins once said, “Being miserable is a habit; being happy is a habit; and the choice is yours.” There is some truth to this.

One more suggestion: Go for a whole week without complaining. Not even once. Log it. If you relapse, start your week over. Back to day one. Go for a week without complaining...and watch the people around you change. Such is the power of mirror neurons.
A REWARDING CAREER

‘TAKE CARE OF OUR PEOPLE, AND THE BUSINESS WILL TAKE CARE OF ITSELF’ – THIS IS THE MOTTO THAT DRIVES MCDONALD’S IN DEVELOPING THE CAREER OF ITS EMPLOYEES

By A K CHUA
editor@leaderonomics.com

WHILE many of us have walked to the Golden Arches (some of us for several decades now!) and come to expect the welcoming smiles of the McDonald’s crew, I wonder how many of us really know what it means to be part of the team at McDonald’s. I caught a glimpse of this at the recent Aon Hewitt’s Best Employers Malaysia 2015 awards where I shared a table with the managing director Stephen Chew and human resources director Hezzi Hamid.

When the Best Employer special recognition for diversity and inclusion award recipient was called, the McDonald’s team leapt up in unison – cheering uproariously. “None of us is as good as all of us.”

Qaisara is a shining example of someone who has worked hard and succeeded at McDonald’s. There’s no stopping her now – after all, three of nine McDonald’s global CEOs started as crew!

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A RETURNS REWARDING CAREER

BEST EMPLOYER FOR WOMEN IN 2015

The Aon Hewitt Best Employers Malaysia 2015 study offers a professional, data-driven approach to recognising the best employers through the use of three data sources and an external judging panel.

This year, the Aon Hewitt Best Employers Malaysia 2015 Special Recognition for Diversity & Inclusion (Women) was awarded to McDonald’s Malaysia for their best practices in attracting, engaging and retaining women in the workforce.

“This prestigious award is a testament to our concerted efforts in promoting diversity and inclusion in our organisation, especially in terms of offering career progression, development opportunities and flexible arrangements to help the women in our workforce realise their full potential,” said Stephen Chew.

A GREAT WORKING ENVIRONMENT

When asked about her own early experiences at McDonald’s, Qaisara shared, “I was inspired by my superiors who developed me and helped to unleash my true potential.” It is no wonder then that restaurant manager Qaisara also strives to inspire her own team.

COME AND LEARN

In answer to Qaisara’s aspirations to grow and become an effective leader, McDonald’s has provided her with extensive training and development courses ranging from coaching and people management; to balancing quality, service, cleanliness and value; to advanced leadership and operational skills. Building on her natural abilities and leadership potential, Qaisara was groomed to take on more responsibilities each year; and the more she was entrusted with, the more committed Qaisara was to meet and overcome her new challenges. She went from strength to strength and within four years of joining the company, Qaisara became a McDonald’s restaurant manager.

McDONALD’S FAMILY

“We respect each other – our colleagues are also like family and friends,” beams Qaisara. “It’s important to have a good attitude. And there must be teamwork. Our founder, Ray Kroc, said, ‘None of us is as good as all of us.’”

So Qaisara, why would you encourage your own family and friends to join McDonald’s?

“We give opportunities to everyone to succeed. Whether you’re young or old, educated or not, male or female, you can succeed as long as you perform well at your job. McDonald’s provides the environment – you just have to learn and deliver!”

Indeed, Qaisara is an excellent example of someone who has worked hard and succeeded at McDonald’s. There’s no stopping her now – after all, three out of nine McDonald’s global CEOs started as crew!

IT’S A (Mc)WRAP!

With over 260 McDonald’s restaurants in Malaysia and counting, the prospects of starting a career with the world’s leading food service retailer is available to everyone.

OF McDonald’s RESTAURANT MANAGERS IN MALAYSIA ARE WOMEN

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THE BEST KEPT SECRET OF CORPORATE COACHING

By JOSEPH TAN

Why should smart corporate leaders make coaching the corner of their business or manage their life?

If leaders are made and not born, who or what makes them? Many leaders take pride in it. They view their own hands sculpted with guts and grit which form the success which they experience today. Why then should successful corporate leaders require coaching when all of them should be coaching others?

Leadership training is a profitable business. Singaporean leaders prefer good money to love an adissuasive telling them how to run the business or manage his or her life.

Here’s the best-kept secret of corporate coaching:

Corporate leaders who are looking for sustainable success have a regular sounding board which reminds them that there is no such thing as a whirlwind leader. From a BBC interview with Usain Bolt after the 100m final, he shared that Bolt is not a good starter. He had been worrying about it for more than 10 years. He had to find a coach who was an objective and scientifically-validated approach to performance improvement. Since then, he has constantly focused on his weaknesses.

Each of us has a race to run. To run (and finish) this race well, we cannot afford to be distracted by our surroundings. Any help we can get which focuses on our strengths is well worth the investment of time and energy.

Joseph Tan is CEO of Corporate Coach. Good Monday.

A DRIVING FORCE

By PREMA JAYABALAN

Our Star Athletes Share Their Stories and Pillars of Strength

T he healthy obsession with a new lifestyle and lifestyle attainment is an epidemic. It is not just the young who are jumping on the bandwagon. Despite the wealth of information and data out there, not many people take the journey of changing their lifestyle to the next level. Training, health, and fitness are important, but how do you develop a lifestyle of living at the peak of fitness? It’s not about being healthy, it’s about being the best you can be.

Darren Liew (Badminton) 

I can say that my coach plays a very big role in shaping me into who I am today. I am currently in my last year of Handanowo saw the potential in me and nurtured it. He encouraged me to go further and to always reach for the stars. He is always pushing me to do my best and never has stopped believing in me.

My coach saw that things and he didn’t love me any less when I am on my lowest point. He constantly motivates me and keeps me going.

 handicaps have improved, not only on the courts but in life as well. He has disciplined me and made me a better person on and off the courts. I want to take this opportunity to thank my coach for being an awesome person, his faith in me, as well as for constantly believing in me.

I wouldn’t be who I am today if it wasn’t for him.

Low Wei Wern (Squash) 

Many in the squash world know that the first and only Malaysian who is based locally to break the Top eight of the World Rankings but only a handful of know of my coach, a man who has spent countless hours working with me every single day. I am summering I achieve my goals.

I am grateful to my coach, Toyo, who has stood by me every step of the way from losing to winning. Under 15 to eventually winning the World Champion under 18. Under 25, I eventually won the World Champion under 25. I am really happy that I have the opportunity to do more in the coming years before I go to school. I am grateful for all the hard work, dedication, and commitment from the coach of the sports that I train. I had an outstanding junior career, being the holder of the British, Scottish, Danish and Malaysian Junior Champion titles. I also emerged the Asian Junior Champion three times.

I am grateful to my coach, a man who has spent countless hours working with me. I am grateful to my coach for being an awesome person, his faith in me, as well as for constantly believing in me. I wouldn’t be who I am today if it wasn’t for him.

BOLTON V 1894

The professional football club Bolton Wanderers is based in Bolton, Greater Manchester, England. It is an English football club, competing in the English Football League. The club was founded in 1855 and was one of the first football clubs in the world to achieve success in an international competition.

The team was established in 1888 as Victoria Wanderers and played most of its home matches at the Victoria Ground. The club changed its name to Victoria Wanderers in 1897 and then to Wanderers in 1900. In 1920, the club was renamed Bolton Wanderers.

The club’s current home ground is the Macron Stadium, which replaced the team’s former home ground, Burnden Park, in 2013.

The club has won the Football League Championship twice and the FA Cup five times. The team was a founder member of the Football League in 1892 and has been a member of the top flight of English football in every season since its formation.
3 LIFE LESSONS FROM ‘THE FIGHT OF THE CENTURY’

By JONATHAN YABUT
editor@leaderonomics.com

Yes, many of us anticipated and watched the Manny Pacquiao-Floyd Mayweather fight last month, dubbed as the “fight of the century”. It probably took us a week or more to accept the fact that our Asian hero wasn’t able to bring home the bacon. Despite his loss, Pacquiao remains the winner in our hearts.

His failure in that match made us realise how much more we value him for being the ultimate Asian pride.

The support wasn’t just evident among his fellowmen, but the rest of the world clearly cheered Pacquiao on as the real winner.

In the spirit of celebrating Pacquiao and our pursuit of hacking the corporate world, here are some life lessons Pacquiao taught us despite his defeat.

1. YOUR CHOICE OF ‘BEINGFEARED’VS ‘BEING LIKED’ TO SUCCEED IN LIFE MATTERS

You may have noticed that while Mayweather is already too expensive to endorse any brand, his boxing shorts carried zero logos compared with Pacquiao’s.

He is the star athlete that sponsors don’t want to touch, as CNN quotes. After all, which company likes to be associated with someone who prefers “money” as his nickname?

His last endorsement deal was in 2009 for a telecommunications and shoe company, and neither was renewed the year after.

His records of domestic violence and racist rants online will probably take more than an Olivia Pope to clean his image.

This is not to say that Pacquiao is a saint (as our Pinoy hero himself has his own fair share of personal shortcomings), but the latter does a better job in keeping an image that the general public aspires for.

The biggest dilemma every-one faces in life is the choice between “being feared” vs “being liked” to succeed in our goals.

There is no right or wrong option to this. In South-East Asia, prosperous neighbours like Singapore and Malaysia prove that in the context of pursuing progress amid chaos, an iron hand can be effective (and in the long run, earns the respect of people after good results become visible).

Research shows that a commanding ruler works best if subordinates accept hierarchy as part of society.

But nice guys can also finish first as long as they use the right strategies that prevent others from “taking advantage of them”, as studies suggest. Harvard Business Review cites studies where acts of altruism, something which Pacquiao is known for, can increase someone’s status in the group. Leaders who project warmth (and smile like Pacquiao), even before they exhibit competence, are trusted more than others.

While the numbers clearly show that he lost the fight, you can say that Pacquiao was the real victor in the eyes of the spectators — the battle which we all aspire for in real life.

The reason is simple: people love him more. He smiles while he is being weighed, he shares his personal life, he introduces us to his mother (and the world was never the same again), he sings whenever there was a microphone.

He knows that even though he is a sports icon, he still takes the time to show that he’s one of us.

In the context of sports where every athlete is celebrated with the ideals of motivation, discipline, and drive, Pacquiao simply wins the people’s hearts by a mile, and a smile.

2. LOOK FOR A ‘HIGHER PURPOSE’ ONCE YOU REACH THE TOP

While I’m not a big fan of Pacquiao as a politician, you have to give it to the man who decided to get out of the ring to help and inspire people to greatness.

He makes the Philippines prouder than balsalt or dried mangoes does. He generously gives back to the people he associates himself with, and proves that success is best enjoyed when it is shared with others.

Like Pacquiao, people who sustain their success all realise one thing when they get to the top: they start thinking about others before themselves.

They reach out to discover their higher purpose. They look for opportunities to develop people because they feel good when they share what they know.

They take accountability when their people fail to succeed because they own the responsibility of setting them up for success.

Beyond fame or making more money, they look for opportunities to give back to communities, and they don’t need press conferences to shout these deeds.

It is no wonder that when these people fail, they easily get the support they need to start all over again.

Like Pacquiao, they still have people’s unwavering loyalty, win or lose. Indeed, it is crucially important to have people beside you who will lift you up when you get shot down.

In John Maxwell’s Five Stages of Leadership, he demonstrates that successful people influence best because of what they represent, and because of what they have personally done for others.

Manny Pacquiao (left) trades blows with Floyd Mayweather. Jr during their welterweight title fight in Las Vegas. Pacquiao lost his biggest fight in the ring, but that won’t stop him from plotting a bigger comeback - in the political arena that is. Some fans still want a rematch because they felt cheated by the lacklustre Pacquiao-Mayweather bout billed by promoters as the ‘Battle of the century’, though boxing analyst Ed Tolenino calls it the ‘Fiasco of the century.’ – AP

> TURN TO PAGE 9
When a crisis hits, organisations must put their best foot forward

The accessibility of suitable spokespeople is crucial. Malaysia met this challenge of crisis communications when dealing with crises. Either they had good translators like many countries do. When it comes to conveying news through communications, here are the elements that are needed by both sides of the communicating circle.

What journalists want

The world is a global village, and in a media briefing or press conference, the accessibility of suitable spokespeople is crucial. Malaysia met this challenge of crisis communications when dealing with crises. Either they had good translators like many countries do. When it comes to conveying news through communications, here are the elements that are needed by both sides of the communicating circle.

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Learning from books

The challenge of crisis communications is to balance the needs of the journalists with the needs of the organisation.

What the organisation wants

Unlike the journalist, the job of a!1 spokesperson is to strategise and build effective media relationships to deliver the right corporate messages. Now, the question to ask is: “Was Malaysia’s media or the airline’s image accurately portrayed as being transparent and forth-
GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

A REFLECTION ON THE SEA GAMES AND WHAT THIS BIENNIAL MULTI-SPORT EVENT MEANS TO US

By JOHN WALTER BAYBAY
editor@leaderonomics.com

A

s anyone can imagine, Singapore has braided herself for the upcoming 28th South-East Asian Games this June 13–26, 2015. The multi-sport event will host 7,000 athletes from 11 countries in the region.

The number does not account for the expected spectators and perhaps many more who are affected by the logistics and economic impact of the event.

While the event could be seen as a mini version of the Olympics, the impact of the games deserves a deeper understanding into how it affects all of us and our mindssets, even after the event has taken place.

The history of the original Olympics goes as far back as ancient Greece in eighth century BC. The games were supposedly played in Olympia in homage to Zeus but was later banned in 393 AD by the Christian Roman emperor Theodosius.

It was not until 1896 that the first “modern” Olympics was held again in Athens with 280 participants from 13 nations and was later held in different host countries every four years. The last one was held in Sochi, Russia in 2014.

The SEA games or what was known back in 1958 as the South-East Asian Peninsula (SEA) games came as an offshoot of the Asian Games in Japan when then vice-president of the Thailand Olympic Committee Luang Sukhum Nayaoradit conceptualised an event that would help promote cooperation, understanding and relations among South-East Asian countries.

I had once qualified for the Youth SEA Games for swimming when I was twelve after having won two silvers (butterfly and freestyle) and one gold (breaststroke) at a local cup. Before then, I had been standing on podiums on numerous sprint events as well as being part of the La Salle swim team for years.

What ensued after qualifying, however were days upon days of swimming four km per day. My eyes were bloodshot from chlorine and I found myself absolutely sick of swimming the pool. I eventually quit halfway in training and never made it to the games but the experience is something that I will carry with me for the rest of my life.

It takes a lot of grit; and apparently I had not enough of it at that point in my life. But because of that, I do know for sure what it takes. It requires dedication, focus, financial and family support. Some of which I did not have at the time. The bottom line is that winning and competing takes commitment from all sides of the game.

But with all the grandness and scale of these events, what do all of these games mean to us on an individual scale? What do these games have to do with our own games in life? Science says that the games we watch have a direct impact on us and tell a lot about ourselves and our needs.

In a scientific study, it was found that watching a game increases endocrine bleeding. We project some of our own feelings into the games we usually play that are not found in the regular Olympics. This includes Muay Thai, Silat and Arnis.

In the Philippines, the nation came to a grinding halt as the entire nation was glued to the screen in watching what supposedly was to be the “fight of the century” between the Philippines’ national hero Manny Pacquiao and Floyd Mayweather.

While the event was somewhat of a disappointment, I had to reflect upon the reason why a game such as this seemed so important. Here are some of the reasons I found.

• NATIONAL PRIDE: Games of this scale (international in magnitude) tend to inspire nationalist sentiments as our athletes take in for amusement. In 1994, when Brazil won the World Cup, Brazilians in New York City rallied to the streets in an ad-hoc parade around town. New Yorkers who were unfamiliar to football (soccer) were shocked to see all the fuss.

• Sports and game promoters prey upon our primal and emotional needs by attributing the best of what we could be upon our athletes. Some of the narratives that we often hear are as extreme as Good vs. Evil, just as we saw in the Pacquiao and Mayweather fight, to a battle between East and West.

• With the SEA games, it is a friendly and fair battle among our Asean nations. The good thing is that the SEA games contextualises its events to accommodate games we usually play that are not found in the regular Olympics. This includes Muay Thai, Silat and Arnis.

• In the Philippines, the nation came to a grinding halt as the entire nation was glued to the screen in watching what supposedly was to be the “fight of the century” between the Philippines’ national hero Manny Pacquiao and Floyd Mayweather.

The takeaway in all of these is perhaps the character we all need to incorporate from the athletes and the process of sports itself. We need to ensure an atmosphere of fairness, sports mindedness and grit and take them into our own life manoeuvres.

We all have our battles but we also need to have the heart of a real champion to win in the game of life.
JUST SAY ‘NO’

By MAJURA PERASHOT
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IS YOUR WORST HABIT THE INABILITY TO TURN DOWN ANY REQUEST?

MY difficulty in saying “no” has led me to search for ways to stand my ground when necessary, and to make it a habit. I started by using the AVP map in three easy steps:

A FOR AWARENESS
We need to identify and be aware of why we tend to go “yes,yes,yes” when asked to do something. Once you are aware of the drivers in your behaviour, you can manage your responses better by modifying your gut reactions.

V FOR VISION
Next, set an achievable target for yourself. Know what you want to see by the end of the year after you started saying no. Does your health improve? Did you get enough sleep? Are your friends and family happy with the time that you get to spend with them?

P FOR PLAN
And last but not least, plan your way to achieve this vision by identifying tools or methods that can help you say no.

IS IT SO DIFFICULT TO SAY ‘NO’?

A lot of people especially women have difficulty in saying a firm “no” to something they don’t really want to do. The inability to give a firm “no” is not only counterproductive, it is also very stressful as you will need to juggle the additional tasks and appointments that you have agreed to. Many of us find it challenging to say no because we want to be liked as individuals. We do not want to disappoint close doors to opportunities. However, believe it or not, by saying no, we are actually opening doors to many other chances we don’t really want to do.

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WHY IS IT SO DIFFICULT TO SAY ‘NO’?

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DECIDE TO SAY NO

To say “no”, you have to begin with a decision to do so and be firm with the choices that you have made. Be firm and unapologetic in your response but avoid appearing aggressive as this may burn the bridges between you and the asker. Oftentimes, people tend to give reasons as to why they cannot take the extra load of work or participate in a particular event as a way to say no. However, sometimes “no, thank you” is the complete sentence.

By giving excuses, you are allowing people to manoeuver around you. You are also allowing yourself to fall into the cycle of lies should you not be honest in your excuses. This will not only tarnish your reputation as an individual, you will also appear as someone who is not able to make decisions and hold his/her ground.

STOP OFFERING

Asians are known for their generosity and therefore, we tend to offer as much help to others as possible. However, when it comes to work, sometimes it would be best to identify our capacity in doing the job before offering to actually do it.

If the task is something that you believe would be really great in accelerating your growth, improve your skills as well as help you achieve what you want, then take some time to identify your current workload and understand how much effort you will have to invest before volunteering to help.

You are, after all, responsible for your own portfolio. It is not going to be easy for many who are not used to saying no. However, saying no is a skill that can be learned. All you need to do is to start saying no right now. Do not delay your decision.

Start caring for yourself more as that is essential the most important reason to start saying no. The lack of courage to say no will slowly erode a person who lacks confidence, self-belief and trustworthiness. This may not only cripple your relationships, it may potentially cost you your next career advancement.

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DOES BLOCKING YOUTUBE, TWITTER AND FACEBOOK IMPROVE PRODUCTIVITY AT WORK?

JUST AS OFFICE SUPPLIES AND WORK PHONES CAN BE ABUSED, SO CAN SOCIAL MEDIA. DOES ‘RESTRICTING ACCESS’ TO SOCIAL APPS, VIDEO STREAMING, GAMING AND STOCK TRADING SITES HELP AN EMPLOYEE FOCUS AT WORK?

In our special HR Talk Q&A, we gather a number of human resources experts to answer questions from readers.

Here, you can get the right advice from professionals who are actively involved in human capital development, and who understand your groups about dealing with the competitive forces in employment today.

HR TALK

JANET LUI
Senior VP group human resources,
Taylor’s Education Group

WHAT LUI SAYS
While some employers believe that blocking social media access in the office will improve productivity, such a measure is difficult to accomplish in our connected world.

When employees are not engaged, they fall victim to the endless distractions at work. Long before the introduction of online social media, disengaged employees were chit-chatting around the office, socialising on the phone or finding other personal things to attend to instead of working.

If they are blocked from sites like YouTube, Twitter and Facebook, employees who are determined to go online can still use data plans on their personal mobile devices to socialise on the internet.

If implemented poorly, the policy of blocking social media sites at the workplace can increase staff dissatisfaction and reduce productivity.

Employees may feel aggrieved towards their company for not trusting or empowering them and, instead, controlling their personal space.

Some companies use sites like YouTube, Twitter and Facebook to engage with their customers and to build their corporate and employer brand.

When employees tweet or communicate on Facebook about the positive aspects of their work experience, they become good brand ambassadors for the company, which will benefit the employer.

That said, to have no governance at all on social media usage at the workplace will tempt internet-addicted employees to abuse their rights.

To weed out the small percentage of problematic cases, a policy with guidelines on personal Internet usage during working hours can be established.

Some companies use tools to monitor Internet activity levels. This is a viable option for employers who do not wish to totally block access to social media sites during work hours.

Rather than blocking Internet sites to try to improve productivity, employers can focus on enhancing employee engagement and retention instead.

Drivers to keep employees engaged at work include having a shared purpose, promoting core values that steer company culture, providing clear direction and goals, measuring outcomes objectively and creating an enjoyable working environment.

Surveys have shown that there is a positive correlation between highly-engaged employees and high-performing companies.

ARESANDIRAN J. NAIDU
President, Malaysian Institute of Human Resource Management

WHAT ARESANDIRAN SAYS
Social media is the way forward for everyone today. But it has received unfavourable attention at the workplace by some employers, who do not realise that social media incurs a negligible cost.

In the new world, technology and communications are important buzzwords. Higher usage will undoubtedly result in higher productivity and efficiency.

But like everything else, there is a need for discipline to ensure that usage and application of social media at the workplace is regulated properly and not abused.

There must be rules and guidance for the usage and application of social media. Unfortunately, organisations that are set in the traditional patterns apply decision-making in a hierarchical manner. This is an old school way of doing things which prevents new thinking or innovations to be made openly and hence nobody takes responsibility for new approaches, such as introducing and integrating social media into work.

So the easy approach is to follow the crowd, and discourage the introduction of social apps.

However, in certain workplaces, employers have encouraged the use of such apps with guidelines and rules. These employers have seen the benefits that social media can provide, such as improved communication and organisational effectiveness.

Whether you welcome or discourage such apps, it all depends on the attitude of leaders in the organisation. A conservative leader will always see the negative side and discourage the usage of apps.

They fail to realise that technology through “social media” comes with no cost, and there are gains to be obtained for organisations that are quick to adopt and harness new products on the Internet.

Survey has shown, Malaysians, are savvy when it comes to social media application. It has become part of their lives, mainly through the educational environment.

If employers block access to such apps at the workplace, there may be poor engagement and sharing/growing between employees.

Talents may not be attracted to work with such organisations. Therefore, employers must welcome changes and adopt social media at workplace wholeheartedly.