

KAREN SAYS

ENGINES OF GROWTH

IT has always bothered me knowing that people are not appreciated for the work they do because it was not “mainstream” (or in my grumpy young mind “froufrou” enough). I made it a point to, for example, always hang out with the maintenance and engineering staff at the hospital I worked with – or at least randomly say THANK YOU to them for making sure everything worked well.

Too often, teams that work backstage orchestrating the smooth-running of organisations are literally not visible. Or called in only when disaster strikes. The M&E guys found me funny, but the twinkle in their eyes told me they appreciated being appreciated.

My father taught us to always respect anyone who earns an honest living. He must have somehow been the inspiration for shows like Mike Rowe’s *Dirty Jobs* and *Somebody’s Gotta Do It* – which in turn have been the inspiration for this issue.

And when I am not wavering between being utterly perplexed by a machine and dancing for joy for fixing it, I think about how inefficient it is for hoards of young people to avoid a career path that has traditionally been perceived in a negative light.

Even though that may precisely be where their passion lies, and as many have pointed out in this issue, yield better financial prospects too. Mitch Ditkoff draws the line in the sand and says without reservation that the choice is ours – and that we need to listen to our own gut instinct to decide.

But first, we take a macro view of countries who recognise that the global skills gap in skilled trades will have a significant impact on their economies if not addressed, as well as the success stories where vocational training and career options are highly respected by society. Then we zoom down to you – yes you, me and everyone around us – and what role we might play to reverse the imbalance that has been brought about by misconceptions and perhaps, the fear of the unknown.

As a sanity check, we really wanted to hear from the horses’ mouths – our intrepid interns Jasmine Chuah and Sara Yee connected with several students for their take on a career in the skilled trades, as well as someone who has already embarked on one. An eye-opener surely. Gen Y and Z once again deviate from the “norm”. Building on that, Sandy Clarke helps us understand what might be the differences in perception in his homeland, the UK and his once-upon-a-time home Malaysia.

Wendy Lee is back and this time addressing the question of facial hair! To shave or not to shave.

Lim Lay Hsuan shares with us a day in the life of an engineer and repairer of cars – someone who takes pains to constantly elevate his skills as well as that of his young apprentices. And because it totally makes sense in this week’s issue, Prema Jayabalan reveals the story of another engineer turned make-up artist. *We do* love our engineers!

In her debut article, Jasmine Chuah, rather enthusiastically covers the great experience of being at DIODE Kids Camp, and the joys of a facilitator seeing the campers bloom and bond.

Last and certainly not least, we have Part 2 of Father’s Day messages coming in for our cherished dads.

Onward, upward!

KAREN NEOH
Editor
leaderonomics.com

TUNE IN

Want practical tips for success on your way to work? We’re on

CAPITAL FM
88.9FM
in the Klang Valley

107.6FM
in Penang

every Monday
from 7am to 8am.

JOIN US!

EDITORIAL
Adviser
ROSHAN THIRAN
Editor
KAREN NEOH

Contributing editors
PREMA JAYABALAN
NINA TI
LIM LAY HSUAN

Sub-editor
LEE KAR YEAN

Layout, Art & Design
TUNG ENG HWA
ZULHAIMI BAHARUDDIN
ADZNAM SABRI
HAFIS IDZLA

SHANKAR
MOHD KHAIRUL
MUHD HAFEZ
RAZZIAH

Writers & Contributors
MITCH DITKOFF
SARA YEE
JASMINE CHUAH

SANDY CLARKE
WENDY LEE

TRY THIS!

Do you have an **opinion** you’d like to share with us? Visit leaderonomics.com or write to us at editor@leaderonomics.com. Please provide your full name, occupation (designation and employer) and telephone number.

Want more content sent directly to your email?

Subscribe to our **Leader’s Digest** by emailing leadersdigest@leaderonomics.com

YOUR FUTURE, YOUR CHOICE

By **PREMA JAYABALAN**
prema.jayabalan@leaderonomics.com

WHEN my daughter was born two years ago, it was one of the most magical moments for my husband and me. We did not have it easy when it came to having a baby. With two miscarriages and a fully-monitored pregnancy for the third time, our daughter’s safe arrival was indeed a blessing, even though she arrived two months early.

I still remember some of the early conversations my husband had with her. I was happy to see him talking lovingly to our little one until his one statement caught me off-guard.

“Baby girl, you are special and you are going to grow up to help save babies like Dr Liew and Dr Mary.”

My gynaecologist and my daughter’s paediatrician respectively, they both played important roles in delivering and caring for my child.

Hmm... What happened to letting her choose her own career? I voiced this out to my better half, lamenting that we should not dictate what she should become. She should be allowed to pursue her career of choice.

My husband, however, was insistent that he was not dictating but rather letting her know how noble these professions are. He wanted her to help parents like us in the future. I understood his feelings, considering the trauma we went through.

But then, I also decided that if Shakthisri came back home one day and said, “Amma, I want to become a chef, a diver or a hairstylist,” she would get the go-ahead nod from me. **Here is why:**

1 SECURITY Skilled trades cannot simply be outsourced. If you are good at what you do, then you will be sought after by everyone for the quality of your service.

Take most of us for example, we all have our favourite hairstylist whom we go to simply because that person does wonders to our crowning glory. We do not mind paying a little more when we are ensured that our tresses are in good hands. It’s always that one hairstylist we have been going to and most likely will go to till the end.

2 YOU ARE THE BOSS Almost everyone today, wants to be on top. Being an entrepreneur is high on most Gen-Y’s wish list. Having acquired a skill in the trades enables you to be your own boss.

You have a culinary degree? Great! You can work for a few years to gain experience and then, start your own catering service or eatery. You want the flexibility of working from home? No problem! You can start your own home-baking business and work at your own pace.

3 THE MONEY IS GOOD People in the skilled-trades are earning well these days. Some are even earning more than those with white-collar jobs. This is a normal scenario in countries like Canada and the United States. I am sure it’s also happening here in our country. Or else why would we hear of people who have left their corporate jobs to become make-up artists or florists or mechanics? Besides the passion, I am sure the income generated plays a role.

So, my dear daughter, be what you want to be; your parents are behind you all the way (your mother is and we will get papa to say yes too!)



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



- 01** “The only person you are destined to become is the person you decide to be.” – **Ralph Waldo Emerson**
- 02** “We must believe that we are gifted for something, and that this thing, at whatever cost, must be attained.” – **Marie Curie**
- 03** “Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life.” – **Confucius**
- 04** “I’m looking forward to the future, and feeling grateful for the past.” – **Mike Rowe**
- 05** “The supreme accomplishment is to blur the line between work and play.” – **Arnold J. Toynbee**