Worthy leader
Address your weaknesses but celebrate your strengths as well
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YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE

WHAT are your strengths? How do you help others? Where do you fit into the world around you?

For most of us, these questions will be incredibly difficult to answer. Putting self-awareness aside, we’re generally influenced from a young age to question our worth, to rid ourselves of any pride, and to look at where we are weak instead of focusing on the areas in which we excel.

Undoubtedly, humility is a wonderful virtue, and being free from pride helps us to avoid arrogance and complacency. But we tend to avoid what’s good about ourselves to the point where we can no longer see how we benefit others and contribute to society.

Nevertheless, we are quick to extend kindness and compassion for others, but fairly reluctant to extend the same courtesy to ourselves. Great spiritual teachers through the ages have taught us to love our neighbours as we love ourselves. This can lead to stress and ill-health, both physically and mentally.

On the contrary, we’re more important than we believe ourselves to be. Of course, it’s necessary to realise the balance between humility and pride — we need measures of both, and to veer towards either extreme is unhealthy.

But it is essential that we appreciate our contributions to others. For example, I’ve previously matched-made couples who now have wonderful children (and pets), and appear to be living happy lives. My introductions between people who otherwise may never have met have resulted in very positive results for all concerned. It could be that they would have gone on to be happy regardless of my intervention, but they could have also ended up travelling down a less happy road.

These are just two examples from my own life of how I’ve helped to make a positive impact. I’m sure there are many others, just as there will be many ways in which you have made a positive impact. I’m sure there are many others, just as there will be many ways in which you have made a positive impact.

There are many pointers within this week’s pages to make a difference to your own life — give it a try and do get in touch with the team here to let us know how you’re getting on.

Till next week,
SANDY
Editor
Leaderonomics.com

YOU CAN INFLUENCE TOO!

THERE is a common misconception that only those in authority are effective leaders. This is far from the truth. Leadership is not about titles, it’s about influence. Without influence, you will not be able to lead others.

As John Maxwell says, “The true measure of leadership is influence, nothing more and nothing less.”

This session with Leaderonomics faculty trainer Gerald Ebenezer will focus on understanding what influence is and how you can increase your influence with others.

For other great leadership insights, including those by John Maxwell, visit www.leaderonomics.com. If you missed any of our past issues, go to www.leaderonomics.com/publications and download for FREE!

By Lim Lay Hsu
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Mental health is generally not discussed in our culture, let alone when it comes to mental health in the workplace.

Employers are unwilling to talk openly about stress, anxiety and depression as they’re often associated with weakness and failure.

Based on the 2011 National Health and Morbidity Survey, 12% of Malaysians aged between 18 and 60 years are suffering from some form of mental illness.

From the data, the affected ones are of working age. Imagine how this will translate to productivity and well-being at work when this issue is not addressed.

This session with Leaderonomics faculty trainer Gerald Ebenezer will focus on understanding what influence is and how you can increase your influence with others.

Here are 10 ways to support better mental health in your organisation (sourced from www.mentalhealth.org.my).

1. Increase awareness of mental health conditions. Make information available in the workplace.
2. Increase awareness of mental health responsibilities. Provide information on how everyone can look after their own mental health.
3. Reduce stigma. Speak openly about mental health and encourage others to do the same.
4. Be prepared to help: Build skills and confidence, so you can approach someone who may be experiencing difficulties.
5. Encourage staff to seek treatment: Nearby mental health services and information lines can provide support and resources.
6. Support staff with mental health conditions: Change their roles or environment to help them stay at or return to work.
7. Monitor and manage workloads: Encourage people to speak up early and seek guidance.
8. Get more staff input: Find out how people do their work and listen to their ideas.
10. Provide regular feedback: Recognise good work and highlight areas of improvement.

According to the World Health Organisation, depression (a common form of mental illness) is expected to be the leading cause of disability by 2020. We are now five years away from our target of being a developed nation in 2020. Is your organisation ready to address mental health at work head-on?

P.S. Malaysian Mental Health Association is organising a public forum today. Check out www.mentalhealth.org.my to know more.

Editorial
Shaharuddin correspondence editor
Nahla T. managing editor
Liew Kai Hian contributing editor

Soundbytes

Listen to this podcast by scanning the following QR code and post your comments there. Alternatively, write to us at editor@leaderonomics.com.

Join us!
By JUSTIN OOI
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Have you ever shared some advice with a fellow colleague who was working on a project? It probably took you just a few minutes, but it could turn out to be a key ingredient in the project’s success. Even something simple like a warm smile can add much needed cheer to another person’s day.

So, why do we give ourselves a tough time that we’re never quite good enough?

To begin with, it’s usually more urgent for us to evaluate our shortfalls and fix our weaknesses. Mistakes need to be fixed, otherwise we can’t meet the deadline, or fulfill the budget, or complete the project.

In this fast-paced, time-poor society, we often neglect to celebrate our accomplishments. However, it is important to evaluate our success factors so that we can replicate future victories.

We need to hear “Job well done!” frequently enough from others – and from ourselves – in order to stay motivated.

PLEASE PLEASE ME

From childhood to adulthood, we’ve been programmed to please others – family, friends, teachers, partners, bosses, and so on. That’s fine, up to the point where we try to please everyone but ourselves.

In many challenging jobs today, we’re constantly playing catch-up. For example, “Our shortfall in revenue versus target is currently RM500,000” or “We’re two weeks behind the targeted completion date for this project.”

With that in mind, it’s quite common for bosses or colleagues to remind us to buckle up and how we should please them. They might say things like, “What’s your action plan to reduce the revenue deficit?” or “You’re not aggressive enough in driving projects.”

If you’re like me at times, you’ll replay such comments in your head when you’re stressed. Before you know it, your self-talk may sound a lot like a drill sergeant.

Most of us are not comfortable with public speaking; inaccurate self-perception may be the root cause of our inability to deliver our value. However, it is important to evaluate our success factors so that we can replicate future victories.

We need to hear “Job well done!” frequently enough from others – and from ourselves – in order to stay motivated.

DITCH THE NEGATIVE SELF-TALK

A healthy dose of humility is excellent, but being a self-beating doormat isn’t. If you’re already a supremely confident person, read no further. For those who feel “I’m not good enough” at times, here are some suggestions to acknowledge your own value.

1. EVALUATE YOUR WEAKNESS OBJECTIVELY

It may be time to dump certain baggage; inaccurate self-perceptions or ways you’ve been defined. Self-perception: “You’re always slow.”

Fact: You take time to process data and write reports. You’ve missed some deadlines recently.

Additional Fact: You’re analytical, work carefully and produce quality reports. You’re not always slow.

Action: Moderate your weaknesses and turn them into strengths. Be less ‘fussy’ with details that don’t matter much to bosses and colleagues, so that you still produce above-average reports within deadlines.

2. RECOGNIZE YOUR STRENGTHS

a) What are your traits that consistently earn you compliments?

“He’s really reliable in collaborating with us to design new machines so that our production line works smoothly.”

b) What are the types of tasks regularly assigned to you?

This shows you have confidence in you in those areas.

c) What areas of your work do you enjoy doing?

Be it writing computer codes, crunching numbers or designing creative graphics – we each have unique skills. Find ways to improve those skills so you get even better at what you like doing.

d) Tap on your unique talents.

Fact: You are a marketer who’s not comfortable with public speaking, but you are a good listener and a steady negotiator in a one-to-one or small group setting.

Action: Look for roles where you close-deals with key personnel or small groups rather than make presentations to large audiences.

3. CELEBRATE YOUR UNIQUENESS

“Too many people overvalue what they are not and undervalue what they are,” said Malcolm S. Forbes, the late publisher of Forbes magazine.

Ms Vaan, a sales coordinator at a pharmaceutical company I once worked for, was a very loud and lively extrovert. This broke the mold as most coordinators – whose job is to process sales orders and other administrative tasks – are usually less boisterous.

She was just being herself. Most of the sales personnel enjoyed her jokes as an antidote to the serious discussions they have with customers throughout the week.

Plus, they recognised that she was very effective at her job too. When we appreciate and accept ourselves, others will too.

INSPIRING INFLUENCE

No one will have the worldwide influence of someone like the president of the United States of America. This doesn’t mean we don’t make a difference. For example, have you heard of Nancy Matthews Elliott? She was a housewife with seven children. Her youngest child who had a wandering mind dropped out of primary school after just three months. She persevered and educated him at home anyway. Her son, Thomas Edison, grew up to be the inventor of over 1,000 inventions patented in his name.

Even if we inspire only one person, we have no idea how far-reaching our influence may be.

William James, the “father of American psychology”, highlighted that “The deepest principle in human nature is the craving to be appreciated.” I agree wholeheartedly with his assessment.

In my previous role as a marketing manager, I was friendly towards my team but kept a professional distance. I was (and still am) quite fastidious with details. This style of management gave my staff more work to do at times.

Hence when I left the team, I was pleasantly surprised to receive an awe-some farewell gift. They gave me a beautiful pen with my name engraved on it. What really touched me also was the greeting card with personalised messages written by each member of staff.

They respectively thanked me for how I’ve guided and encouraged them along the way. One said she considered me a friend rather than just a manager.

It made me realise: If people can appreciate me despite my quirks, why can’t I appreciate myself a bit more? Perhaps you too are touching the life of others without being aware of it, just like my former chief executive officer who visited me while I was in hospital – on her birthday – with a slice of tiramisu cake to cheer me up.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

I read an amusing quote in the Reader’s Digest years ago: “God has wisely designed our bodies so that it’s hard to pat our own back and kick our own butt.”

There will be enough people willing to do the latter, so don’t be too hard on yourself. Remember to appreciate yourself and acknowledge your own value regularly. It will then become clearer how you can touch more lives in a greater way.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, THOMAS EDISON!
Leaderonomics is proud to announce the opening of a new hub in East Malaysia, which will service Sabah, Sarawak and Brunei.

Even as we expand, our mission remains the same: to build people of every age and background into leaders, so that they can be positive and powerful contributors in the development of our nation. Leaderonomics Borneo offers our world-class Corporate Services, Community and Media initiatives.

CORPORATE SERVICES
Our consultants work with you to create customised solutions and experiential learning experiences to propel your organisation to the next level. Our offerings include learning & development, talent acceleration, talent assessment and culture & engagement services to help set your organisation on a sustainable path to high performance.

COMMUNITY
We’ve taken on the mission of investing in the young leaders who will shape Malaysia’s tomorrow. We work with parents, schools and higher education bodies to impact and nurture our nation’s youth from age 8 upwards into young adulthood.

MEDIA
We take content seriously. We produce leadership content in the form of print, digital, audio and video to bring you the best insights, ultimately in the pursuit of helping you grow.

For more information on our services, contact our Borneo Business Development Director Onny Maathai at 011 3303 6278 or email onny.mathai@leaderonomics.com

www.leaderonomics.org
ALLIANCE Bank is committed to cultivating a bright future for graduates in Malaysia through its graduate programme that partners with young professionals to realise their potential. In recognition of its unwavering dedication to developing tomorrow’s leaders, the bank scooped a number of awards this year including: Excellence in Graduate Development at the Human Resources Excellence Awards; Best Graduate Recruitment Programme at the Asia Recruitment Awards; and Best Graduate Programme at the Retail Banker International Asia Trailblazer Awards.

At the heart of its mission, Alliance Bank aims to grow a core group of well-rounded bankers and leaders through its development initiative to empower and engage employees with the right values.

Last November, senior management were delighted to announce that, within just one year, Alliance Bank had leaped from 78th position on the roster of Malaysia’s 100 Leading Graduate Employers to cracking the Top 30. “Winning these awards and recognitions has further reaffirmed the Bank’s mission to support our employees to achieve their full potential,” commented Chew Siew Suam, executive vice president, head of group human resource at Alliance Bank.

Alliance Bank has come a long way since its humble beginnings in 1958, yet it still retains a core set of values that continues to direct the future of the business today. Projecting itself as a “champion team, not a team of champions”, the reality reflects the values held by the bank, which places a heavy emphasis on respect, integrity, teamwork, excellence and ownership.

Its graduate programme leads the way in building competent, reliable and engaged employees. The focus on recognising potential in young professionals and providing a platform for them to grow and develop is testament to the awareness at Alliance Bank of the need to address the concerns of Malaysia’s business community in improving the soft skills of fresh graduates.

**STEP BY STEP**

Alliance Bank not only has a strong sense of how best to cultivate top talent, but its graduate programme also includes a robust employer branding strategy that aims to make sure top talents are retained.

To help ensure this objective is met, the graduate programme is implemented across three key focus areas in order to allow graduates to get a deeper understanding of the bank’s culture, as well as a sense of what they themselves can achieve by learning from the breadth of knowledge and experience at Alliance Bank.

First, the Bank recognised the need to develop employees with the right values, which is done through Alliance Bank Leadership Excellence programmes, which leverages on the provision of existing teams, while raising the next generation of leaders. Highlighting its acute understanding of how leaders are developed, Alliance Bank offers differentiated programmes for future leaders as well as mainstream employees.

Next is the employer branding strategy used to full effect, enhancing the bank’s talent creation pipeline through organising and active participation in career fairs, career talks, campus and university engagements, as well leveraging on social media to engage and interact with graduates.

Through its focus on providing an experiential learning and development platform to learn and grow, Alliance Bank develops its top talent through the most effective process of learn-by-doing. Two of such programmes are its Management Trainee Programme and Structured Internship Programme.

The graduates benefit from a 12-month structured programme designed with a tailor-made syllabus consisting of experiential learning opportunities, exciting projects, and the opportunity of learning directly from the bank’s senior management team.

**DRIVING POTENTIAL**

There’s no question of Alliance Bank’s determination to provide the best graduate programme within the business community. The bank’s future initiatives see the enhanced and continuous development of graduates — even after they have completed their Management Trainee Programme. These include the Alliance Managers Programme, Alliance Leaders Programme and Senior Leaders Programme, all of which will help to accelerate the leadership potential of these young professionals.

Indeed, there has been widespread and ready acknowledgement of the benefit of Alliance Bank’s graduate programme and the impact it has on graduates’ confidence, self-esteem, and ability to perform to a high standard.

Ruben Kempeneer, regional director of Timetric, is enthusiastic in his praise, “Over the past three years Alliance Bank has developed a series of excellent initiatives to enhance the learning and development of its graduate employees. With the leadership, internship and a year-long manage- ment trainee programme, the bank provides a comprehensive toolbox of skills to its graduates to ensure that they are appropriately prepared to create effective change to the bank.”

Any business that hopes to truly cultivate top talent, and retain them following their training, knows that a solid employer branding strategy is vital. This is an area Alliance Bank has clearly dedicated time on developing.

One key aspect of the bank’s employee value proposition lies in its provision of differentiated learning and development experiences. Alliance Bank recognises that diverging from the one-size-fits-all approach to learning not only optimises the ability of graduates to grow and develop, but in applying a differentiated learning strategy, graduates are left in no doubt that this is a bank that cares about their progress — it knows the value of ensuring everyone, from the newest graduate on the programme to the Group CEO, knows that they are valued, respected, and are making a contribution to the bank’s growth.

To help that process along, Alliance Bank’s preference for experiential learning and development once again shines a light on the bank’s astute ability to develop talent, showing that it’s not the practical method of development that matters, it’s how talent is developed that determines how successful graduates will be, as well as their level of commitment to supporting the needs of the bank.

**LOOKING TO THE FUTURE**

With growing concerns that young people in Malaysia are experiencing a shortfall in essential life and professional skills, Alliance Bank has been taking, and continues to take, decisive action to bring out the best in the nation’s graduates and transform them into the leaders of tomorrow. In the banking industry, it’s easy to see companies as faceless corporations that are concerned only with their bottom line. It’s evidently clear this is not the case when it comes to Alliance Bank.

The industry-wide recognition, testimonials and success stories thus far go to show that not only is the bank’s graduate programme transforming the careers of young professionals — the bank’s culture of engaged development and values that centre on respect for the individual exemplify the care and attention that goes into ensuring all employees and senior management are valued and provided with opportunities to grow.

It’s not hard to see why Alliance Bank has scooped a number of coveted accolades in 2015, and no doubt there are more awards and recognitions to come in celebration of the bank’s tireless endeavour to make a difference across the country, helping graduates to realise their worth and fulfil their potential.
YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Within we think the change we want to see in the world, we often look for confidence in the idea that we sometimes can bring about that change. We recall figures such as Gandhi, Mother Teresa, and Martin Luther King, and feel some kind of impact as they did. Making a difference is relative – degree, but absolutely the same kind of impact as they bring about that change.

Perhaps most of us are unlikely to inspire the kinds of global changes inspired by Nelson Mandela, Rosa Parks, and Aung San Suu Kyi, but each of us do make an impact – our lives not only important to us; they also matter in some way and sometimes that impact is felt throughout the lifetime. A few of those people who question your overshadow, take a look at some of the ways you make an impact without even realizing it.

We think that grand gestures have the biggest effect, not so. It’s the small acts of kindness that don’t cost much (if anything at all) that truly make a difference. You make more of a difference to people’s lives than you realize.

WHEN we think of the change that don’t cost much (if anything at all) that truly make a difference. You make more of a difference to people’s lives than you realize.

WHEN we think of the change that make – often, they can’t. But those who suffer from mental ill-health are inspiring examples of success stories and all.

Because I know first-hand what depression is because I know first-hand what depression is because I know first-hand what depression is because I know first-hand what depression is.

Eventually, George realises that, despite the challenges and struggles along the way, his life has been a wonderful life for himself and the people of Bedford Falls.

Tackling the stigma

A great deal of this is the annual World Mental Health Day, which focuses on stigma in mental health. I’ve heard it said that it’s an easy thing to understand, since depression is a disease, and that depression is not because I know first-hand what depression is because I know first-hand what depression is because I know first-hand what depression is.

If we can work to eradicate the stigma of mental health issues and see that mental health is in something that affects more people than we know – because it’s a hidden disease, is just one of the many reasons why mental health and services in Malaysia, visit the mmha.org.my to find out more about mental health and services in Malaysia.

It takes a lot more courage to open up and talk about your mental health issues will feel like they are a burden that their family and friends would be better off without them. They don’t see the positive impact they make – often, they can’t. But those who suffer from mental ill-health are inspiring examples of success stories and all.

You have the most precious gift – life!

It’s a precious gift that all the billions of people who might have been will never know. Having it, by existing, by living, you beat the greatest odds there ever can be. It is the greatest achievement of all: taking that walk in the park where you bumped into an old friend who went on to introduce him to his future wife, you might not be here now. You’ve been given the greatest gift and it’s a responsibility that all the billions of people who might have been will never know. Having it, by existing, by living, you beat the greatest odds there ever can be. It is the greatest achievement of all:

People who think otherwise know that theirs is a wonderful life, and one that matters to us all.

I don’t think I’m going to live much longer. Every hour, I make an impact, to change things for the better, to make the world around you a better place just by being here.

You make more of a difference to people’s lives than you realize.
LEAD LIKE A FATHER
LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE TAILOR MADE MAN

By ALVIN DAN
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“Dreams are conceived long before they are achieved. It’s a powerful thing, especially when it brings purpose to life.”

T hose are the words of the tailor in The Tailor Made Man theatre production that I was involved in July, and I’m here to share with you some of my experiences.

The story talks about Joseph, a teenager who had to go through a number of hardships due to a dream that was given to him that seemed to have a bigger meaning and greater purpose than he could have imagined.

That is one of the things that speak to me most, knowing and being reminded that dreams have a special place in each person’s heart, to drive us towards a specific purpose.

I took on the role of Jacob, Joseph’s father. From the onset of the rehearsals leading to show day, this was already a challenging role for me as I’m not a father in real life, and yet here I was, playing a father to five teenagers with different personalities.

UNDERSTAND THE WHYS

My biggest challenge was to portray and move like how an elder person would, to be precise in my steps, to slow down my speech and to walk with a walking stick.

At first, it felt like an impossible balancing act, to move between my own personality and Jacob’s, but I was slowly achieving it, not without proper measures being put in place of course. And this goes for how we are in our workplace as well.

I remember I was asked to read through the story many times, to understand not just the situation that the House of Jacob is in, but to read into the context as well. How would a father behave in any given situation? How would he deal with a son that he favours most? How would he make sure his family continues to do well?

This required me to study the character in depth and it was a lot of trial and error with the director as he continued to advise, explain and question some of the choices I made during the rehearsals. Much like in a workplace, there is a constant call to not just do the work but to understand the context of why we do it. It can even be termed as looking for meaning in the work that we do, and to allow that to fuel us in doing our work better.

COMMUNICATE AND CONNECT

The director mentored me in my acting and my portrayal of Jacob, and he had cultivated a vision from the beginning when it came to my role. I would only be involved in the first two scenes, and would only reappear during the last parts of the production.

The pressure was high, and I needed to make sure I did everything I could to lay the foundations of the story as Jacob.

The director made sure we (me and my five teenage “sons”) went through his countless exercises and rituals before our actual rehearsal.

While I can now look back and understand why it was needed, at that time, it felt like it was totally unnecessary. I felt like just something getting in the way of us doing what we were supposed to do, which was to rehearse the scenes.

The director constantly reminded us to communicate with each other, and to get to know one another on a personal basis.

I’m glad to say that it paid off. He understood that it was absolutely imperative that we portray ourselves as a family by being a family, not just by acting as one.

In any workplace, this same concept rings true. It’s always important to build good connections in our workplace and in the context of our work. Building good relationships within your office will make for an enjoyable work experience. Besides it just being an avenue to get to know someone personally, it also brings about a platform to share experiences and insights on how to work better together, or even how to improve the office workspace as a whole.

Looking not just at the internal, building on external connections outside of the office is also as important. In recent times, collaboration is the keyword, and this calls for people in similar fields to share resources and ideas so that it inspires a sense of community.

Additionally, this will allow the said field to experience an exponential growth, especially if people of equal levels of passion come together with the purpose to build each other up.

TAKING THE LEAD

It was finally the day, the stage was set, crowds were entering the theatre, conversations filled the hall, and the backdrop was quiet with a sense of excitement and anxiousness.

I remember taking lead and gathering my “sons” to huddle together before our big game and took a few deep breaths. As the father, I reminded them the reason we were doing this, much like what was done to us by the director every time we had a rehearsal.

And it became a ritual for us throughout the five shows. We were a team, a family, and we needed each other in order to do this successfully.

Everyone had a part to play, we had our lines, and specific movements. We had to be in synergy with each other, to complement each other in a way that brought life to the story.

The curtain went up, and it was time to give the audience a show that was worth their time, money and effort. To me, that was how we became The Tailor Made Man.
TODAY, Starbucks Coffee ranks as one of the most recognisable brands among Malaysians. Most would associate Starbucks with freshly-roasted gourmet coffee, while others will know it as “the third place” – a place other than our home or our workplace, where we can sit back, relax, and meet with friends.

Zev Siegl was one of the co-founders of this well-loved brand. Although he left Starbucks in 1980 after a decade of service, Siegl continues to be a relevant force that champions the vital role small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play in the economy.

SMALL COMPANIES CAN MAKE BIG CHANGES

When asked about the roles SMEs play in emerging economies, he explained that, in many countries, the combined total performance of SMEs makes up a significant portion of the economy. He added that it is in the interest of nations to be addicted to the performance of large global corporations, while forgetting the droves of smaller players.

Starbucks was one of those small players that made it big. Back in the 1970s, it was a different place when Siegl and his close friends, teacher Jerry Baldwin, and writer Gordon Bowker, founded the company.

Before Starbucks became an internationally phenomenon, coffee-drinking was a highly industrialised affair, with mass-produced, mediocre quality robusta beans in powder form being the order of the day.

Steered by their passion for coffee, the three founders were united by their shared sense of purpose in bringing a cultured approach to coffee-drinking that was missing at the time. Under the tutelage of Alfred Peet – the owner of “Peet’s Coffee & Tea” – the trio gained enough knowledge about the coffee business to start their own store in Pike Place Market, Seattle.

Unlike nowadays, where customers can enjoy the coffee at the store or have it in a takeaway cup, Starbucks began life as a humble retail operation selling wholebean coffee to enthusiasts who would grind and brew the beans at home.

WHAT ABOUT BIG, FAST RESULTS?

As Malaysia fast approaches Vision 2020, the need for big, fast results in the private sector is overwhelming. According to Siegl, in order to achieve results, managers of SMEs must have a strong understanding of financial forecasting and financial management, without which companies would inevitably be “playing football with their eyes closed”. There will no doubt be a number of unwelcome surprises in store for companies who are not well-run and well-managed, regardless of their size.

Siegl said that the problem faced by many SMEs and start-ups is that there is a lot of passion put into them but financial management is often neglected. He recounted some of his own experiences during the first decade of running Starbucks.

The year 1971 was ostensibly an unfavourable time to open a business in Seattle because Boeing, the major corporation that many businesses were dependent on, went out of business, taking along many smaller enterprises with it.

Viewing the business as more of a hobby, Baldwin and Bowker kept their day jobs, while Siegl was the only one of the three founders to work full-time at the store. Fortunately, they survived to open more stores.

In 1972, they expanded beyond their capital base – in other words, they ran out of money. It was a difficult and unpredictable moment for them.

They were rescued by a friend who made money in the fishing industry, who offered to help out financially because he loved the idea of having a little coffee company in Seattle. Their benefactor invested a small but sufficient sum to rescue them from the clutches of undercapitalisation.

GOVERNMENT POLICIES THAT HELP

Speaking about “under-capitalisation”, Siegl believes that there are two things governments can do to promote the private sector: first, provide access to capital; and second, prevent capital from falling into failing businesses.

He said government policies that make sense are the ones that are aimed at encouraging entrepreneurship, and those which require business owners to have an accurate sense of reality about their success.

It is ideal, he added, to have government-funded agencies that will make bank loans available, but require excellent business plans and forecasting documents as testament that the management of these private companies is clear about the actions they need to take in order to succeed.

HINDERING PROGRESS

On the other hand, completely restricting access to capital greatly discourages private sector growth. Siegl explained that governments can inadvertently discourage the growth of the private sectors through ill-conceived policies.

Banks became more regulated, and were reluctant to make loans to emerging businesses, leading to slowing down of economic activity as a side-effect.

The second policy that hinders growth of SMEs is allowing passions to go unrestrained. According to Siegl, neglecting good management techniques leads to disastrous results for private businesses, such as closure, forced mergers, and loss of capital that can be put to better use if a more viable plan was constructed and implemented.

THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP

As for leaders, Siegl feels that the digital age enables one to have tremendous amounts of information about their company’s day-to-day operations at their fingertips.

He stated that most executives have a “financial dashboard”, which tells them how the five or six most important aspects, or key indicators, of their company are doing financially – a powerful management methodology, if used to its fullest.

By JACK CHUA
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THE TRANSFORMATIONAL ENTREPRENEUR

ZEV SIEGL’S JOURNEY FROM STARBUCKS TO BEYOND

He concluded that passion and opportunity are insufficient to produce a well-run company – leaders, he suggested, should surround themselves with people who are able to “fill in the gaps” of their own personal weaknesses as a business leader.

Smart entrepreneurs surround themselves with people who are better than themselves in areas that they are not well-versed in, especially in the financial area.

He will be joining other esteemed key speakers including Tan Sri Tony Fernandez at the Global Transformation Forum to speak about transformational entrepreneurship on Oct 21, 2015. Held at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre, the forum aims to gather thought leaders from around the world to have a dialogue on how to drive transformation in the international arena. Leaders in politics, business and social activism will meet to debate, share insights on best practices and discuss case studies on current issues relevant to global transformation.

For ticket and event information, visit globaltransformation.com
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SHWIN Rajgopal is a living evidence that an emphasis on individuality, freedom of thought and a desire to “find your true calling in life” is a sustainable blueprint for achieving success in today’s business world.

Speaking on The Leaderonomics Show, the Indian-born Rajgopal shares his passion for identifying talent within the industry and harnessing a winning culture in individuals.

Having dedicated the past 13 years of his life to transforming the Indian, Indonesian and Malaysian offices of French-based cosmetics giant L’Oréal into booming financially profitable brands, Rajgopal highlights the key ingredients for establishing successful leadership qualities within the corporate sphere.

CHANNELLING AN INSPIRATION

So where did it all start?

“It wasn’t really planned for,” Rajgopal recalls, when quizzed on his entry into the industry after initially graduating with a Bachelor of Science from St Xavier’s College in Mumbai.

It was one of those accidental turns in life.

“I really wanted to pursue my masters in biochemistry and I had everything carved out in that direction. In the interim, I found a job (at Blow Plast India, the largest luggage manufacturer in the country) and one thing led to the other. It turned out to be interesting and I thought my true calling lay in the corporate world.”

Before he knew it, Rajgopal waved goodbye to his biochemistry career and was thrust into the world of international business, spending two years in the Middle East working for the Al Tayer Group in Dubai.

Realising the need to cement his transition into the corporate market, Rajgopal travelled to France to accept a full scholarship at one of the world’s leading business schools INSEAD, completing his Masters of Business Administration (MBA) in 2001.

THE REST, AS THEY SAY, IS HISTORY

His six-year posting as group project manager and then general manager, consumer products division at L’Oréal India, was followed by a successful four-year stint as general manager, consumer products division at L’Oréal Indonesia.

With his profile and reputation on the rise, Rajgopal was subsequently promoted to managing director of L’Oréal Malaysia in 2012 – a position that he has held since.

“Somewhere along the line you find your calling,” Rajgopal says.

“I think that comes in the form of your passion and you realise you are enjoying what you are doing. Today, it’s something that I thoroughly enjoy and I can see that in my work every day, so I know I took the right decision.”

BROADENING YOUR HORIZONS

A matter close to the heart of Rajgopal, and one that has fuelled his passion and the passion of his staff, is that of “mobility”.

Rajgopal is a big advocate of empowering individuals to channel their inner entrepreneurial qualities. He insists his fortune in being able to live and work overseas early in his career has given him the necessary perspective and breadth of global knowledge to achieve the success he has.

“My recommendation is to travel as much as you can early in your career, try to pick up assignments in different countries and you will always come back a stronger professional,” advises Rajgopal.

“I think what adds to the self-dimension when you travel is the fact that you’re able to aggregate opinions that stem from different cultures.”

“You’re able to look at viewpoints that have been shared by different upbringing, different schools of thought. What then happens is that your own opinions thereafter are stronger. You are more robust when you have a point of view.”

At L’Oréal Malaysia, Rajgopal is passionate about instilling “mobility” in his young talent with many aspiring employees being encouraged to take up postings in Singapore, Paris and Shanghai.

He believes travel enables the individual to harness greater freedom of thought – a point that compliments his company philosophy of being an “individual-led” organisation, rather than relying on processes and systems.

“What’s imperative is who you are as an individual and how entrepreneurial you are within the organisation. So we look for leaders right from the start,” he adds.

A lot of our development is mobility-driven. It is our belief the more globally exposed young talents are, the better they are able to deliver when they come back.

“We want to ensure that individuals are able to rise above the process. We really encourage talent within the organisation to confront in a very positive manner, to bring in opinions to the table, to bring in a point of view and get people to speak their minds.”

REACHING YOUR POTENTIAL

Being able to transfer that courage and independent thinking into career results is another weapon in Rajgopal’s armoury. He adds that he has a much better sense of readiness within him to deal with potential unforeseen challenges as a result of his holistic development.

Three things he strongly adheres to when dealing with complicated issues are developing a vigorous work ethic, associating himself with talented people, and maintaining a work-life balance.

His emphasis on “talent” shines through, outlining how essential it is as a leader to associate yourself with talent.

“You never know when talent is going to come to your rescue,” he says.

“You need people who have the innate ability to deal with risk, who are very authoritative with their thinking and very clear cut. These are the qualities that you need.”

With talent, comes management, and Rajgopal is equally concerned at developing a healthy work environment for both himself and his staff.

“I don’t work on weekends and I don’t encourage my team to work on weekends,” the cosmetics industry guru enthuses.

“What you get out of life depends on what you put into it.” (He reads and plays tennis with his son as a form of renewal).

“Don’t encourage my team to work on weekends,” the cosmetics industry guru enthuses.

As a result, Rajgopal, is unabashed about sharing his wisdom with others and is dedicated to inspiring a generation of talented professionals.

For more interesting interviews with diverse leaders on The Leaderonomics Show, visit www.youtube.com/user/leaderonomicsmedia. For The Leaderonomics Show articles, visit www.leaderonomics.com

SUCCESS: BECAUSE YOU’RE WORTH IT

MANAGING DIRECTOR OF L’OREAL MALAYSIA DISCUSSES HIS LIFE ACHIEVEMENTS

By LLOYD GREEN

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THE LEADERONOMICS SHOW

Here is Rajgopal’s response on our Thinkonomics Question of the Week: Relationships

What is the most important ingredient for you to establish a strong relationship?

The epicentre is trust. It’s not just blind faith, it has to be trust that has been demonstrated through actions. It’s not something that should be taken for granted. It’s not something that should be dictated by the relationship. It is something that has to be cultivated. You’ve got to earn it, but once it’s there, it’s probably the fulcrum.

To watch the interview with Ashwin Rajgopal on The Leaderonomics Show, scan the following QR Code:
SPARK – IGNITE YOUR POTENTIAL

By STEPHANIE LING
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T is that time of the year again when enthusiastic and passionate youths from all over Malaysia can be seen streaming into the Leaderonomics office. Nervous energy and silent gazes were shared as the youths sized up their fellow participants in the waiting area — little did they know that new friendships would be forged soon after.

If you are wondering what all the buzz was about, it was the SPARK Leadership Challenge that is conducted annually to select deserving youths for our year-end SPARK Camp.

A GOOD START
The SPARK Leadership Challenge was a one-day affair held on Sept 19. Sign-ups tripled in number this year as the event drew in close to 100 people, comprising of over 30 participants, accompanied by their families.

The Leadership Challenge kicked off at 9am and was carried out concurrently across two venues.

The first part of the Leadership Challenge required each participant to give a three-minute elevator pitch to a panel of judges on a problem faced in their school or community, and to suggest ways in which they would fix it.

Participants quickly surrendered their mobile devices and headed on to the quarantine room after receiving well wishes and thumbs ups from their families.

Walking on stage, many were seen fiddling with their fingers or with grave expressions etched on their faces, but all that disappeared as soon as they stood before the judges.

Participants delivered their speeches eloquently enough to inspire the crowd who were gathered, as well as to impress the judges who assessed them on speech content and public speaking skills, as well as interpersonal skills.

FINDING THEIR FEET
Later in the day in Leadership Challenge 2, participants enjoyed a real world working simulation called Rise and Fall.

This simulation tested their leadership and communication skills, as well as the ability to pull together as a team. This was exciting to watch as it gave the participants the opportunity to apply their skills to a myriad of situations thrown at them.

They could be heard screaming with joy as they completed a task or groaning in frustration as the tables were turned and they had to find ways to adapt and make do with new circumstances.

Sharing in their ups and downs, we witnessed their personalities arise in moments of chaos. Comments from the judges indicated that they were impressed to see the women taking charge in several groups, and to also see everyone stood out in different aspects and they had to find ways to adapt and make do with new circumstances.

When asked how she felt upon hearing her name being called, Ainsley Chan, 14 from SMK Sultan Abdul Samad, said she felt like she was on cloud nine and that she was pretty sure she would not be able to get any sleep, such was the rush of excitement she was feeling.

IN CONCLUSION
Overall, the event proved to be a success. All parties shared the sentiment of the SPARK Leadership Challenge having achieved its objectives, and that it was a great platform to provide our youths with exposure to such programmes for personal development.

SPARK will run from Dec 13–19, 2015 at EPSOM College in Malaysia’s state-of-the-art premises in Bandar Enstek, Sepang. Malaysian youths aged 13–16 from diverse backgrounds are selected and fully sponsored to participate in this unique opportunity to learn and grow together.

Stephanie Ling is part of Leaderonomics Youth. Her personal passion lies in developing youths who can make a positive impact on their communities. As this year’s SPARK Camp coordinator, she hopes to help these youths discover their leadership potential so that they will become the spark that ignites the world! If you would like to find out more about youth programmes, email her at stephanie.ling@leaderonomics.com
WE ARE WHAT WE FEEL
LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM INSIDE OUT

By ADRIAN YAP CHENG KHIN
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If you haven’t watched popular animation studio Pixar’s latest offering Inside Out – watch it! Far beyond just pretty moving pictures, cute lovable sidekicks and beautifully animated well-conditioned hair, the movie was an eye-opening sojourn into the nuts-and-bolts of how we feel.

It threw up a number of thought-provoking questions about the way we process emotions as people, and how that changes during your journey from being a child to adulthood.

SPOILER ALERT
The movie follows Riley, a happy, hackey-loving 11-year-old Midwestern girl, who has her world turned upside-down when she and her parents move to San Francisco.

Riley’s emotions, led by Joy, try to guide her through this difficult, life-changing event. However, the stress of the move brings Sadness to the forefront.

When Joy and Sadness are inadvertently swept into the far reaches of Riley’s mind, the only emotions left in headquarters are Anger, Fear and Disgust, leaving her overall happiness hanging in the balance.

There are many leadership lessons we can learn from the movie, given that its premise is designed to help us reflect on many things. Here are some key ones I’ve picked out.

1. BUILDING INDEPENDENT TEAMS

The crux of the film’s plot was centered on things breaking down when Joy was accidentally removed from the headquarters of Riley’s mind.

With Joy assuming the role of de facto leader earlier on, the ensuing drama was an accurate reflection of just what could happen if you build teams that are not independent of you.

Clearly, Joy never prepared her team for the possibility that she may not be around to steer the ship that is Riley.

Granted, leaving the collective team of Disgust, Fear and Anger in control sounds like what may be happening in Kanye West’s head, but surely Joy could’ve mitigated the slow deconstruction of Riley’s personality if she had planned for that potentiality?

As a leader, if your team may potentially break down when you are away, then you have failed as one.

The key to building a successful team is not to put yourself as the central star by which all processes run through, but to design an effective process and make it the star from which the entire team functions.

If your process is designed right, it doesn’t matter if you or your team members have to step away, the team will still continue to function.

2. VALUING DIFFERENCES

While Joy painted a compelling picture that Riley would be happy so long as she was in charge, it proved the contrary as the movie progressed.

She became so engrossed with being in control and keeping all the other emotions in check that she failed to realise the value that all the other emotions brought to ensuring Riley’s survival and emotional well-being, with especial regard to Sadness.

As the antithesis to what she stood for, Joy saw Sadness as a “problem”, someone that should be kept as far away from the controls to ensure Riley’s continued happiness.

But in the end, it turns out that Sadness was, in actual fact, one of the key reasons why Riley has been happy all this while.

Managers who hang on religiously to all decisions and processes will soon find out one thing – they will soon be left hanging on to these things alone.

Great leaders are not great leaders because they think they can do everything on their own. Great leaders are not afraid to empower their people to think independently, make decisions and even fail.

We know Rome wasn’t built in a day, but it was also not built by one person.

Great leaders build great leaders. Learn to let go at key moments to allow your people to show their strengths, which you may not have.

One of the keys to successful leadership is not to always make decisions on your own, but to recognize when it may be best to let go and allow someone else to take the lead on things.

It is only through this that your people can develop their capabilities and to gradually rise as leaders themselves.

The right perspective is not to see their rise as a threat, but as a legacy to just how effective your style of leadership is.

It’s easy to view someone who is very different from you as a threat to what you plan to achieve.

Poor leaders think in this way. Good leaders, however, recognize that someone with a completely different ideology from themselves represents an opportunity to bring a different perspective to the table.

The value of having a voice of non-conformity challenging the validity of some ideas is so often underappreciated.

Great leaders are never afraid to have their views challenged.

They are great because they know that the unwillingness to allow their ideas to be critiqued so that they can be improved is tantamount to having a stand-up comedy show in front of their mirror, in their room, laughing at their own jokes and then coming out and telling the world that they are a great comedian.

3. LEARNING TO LET GO

Riley was able to express how she really felt to her parents at the end of the movie because Joy finally recognised the crucial part that Sadness had to play, relinquishing the control room.

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