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LEVELLING UP
THE BENEFITS OF GAME-BASED LEARNING
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I knew I was a visionary. At the age of eight, I was gifted a Nintendo console by my parents, and thus began my journey into the world of gaming.

Before long, I argued that it was fine to spend hours at a time helping Mario to save the Princess from Bowser, the incessantly grumpy beast. I was being compassionate. In fact, I told my parents, it was good for me to spend as much time as possible playing Nintendo. Now, the research has finally caught up with eight-year-old me.

My gaming adventures came to an end in my teens – I discovered guitars, and planning out a career as a rock star took over my time. On the occasional retreat to the console, I knew I was getting old when I had to ask my nephews which buttons to press in order to make things move in the right direction. My coordination had found its way to a level somewhere between a Daddy Longlegs and a drunk drummer. It was a harsh reality to face.

For over 10 years, I’ve been in gaming exile and, to my shame, have lost the sense of the point of gaming. I have, though, kept an eye on the research, and am pleased to see that game-based learning is now a subject matter that’s taken seriously.

I don’t have the space here to list all the ways in which games can help us to learn (for example, some games help to improve hand-to-eye coordination), but suffice it to say that organisations and institutes of learning are increasingly using games to their advantage.

In the interests of empirical research, and in preparation for this issue, I downloaded games to my phone. I chose two puzzle games: “Laserbreak Lite”, and a skiing game – the name of which escapes me, after deleting it in frustration.

Point-scoring, the accumulation of trinkets, collecting coins, and levelling-up – the research suggests that these are just some of the ways in which game-based learning inspires us to learn and to keep us motivated.

It certainly seems to work, based on my own experience. “Laserbreak Lite” (a free game) presents some tricky challenges. If I encountered these challenges in a classroom, I’d have likely switched off, however, therein lies the beauty of games: they capture you in ways that ensure that you won’t give up, because the last thing you feel like doing is giving up (unless you play skiing games).

I only wish the folks who developed “Laserbreak Lite” would have been kind enough to enlist the services of Mario – if he was getting old when I had to ask my nephews which buttons to press in order to make things move in the right direction.

Till next week,

SANDY CLARKE
Editor Leaderonomics.com
SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST
THE IMPORTANCE OF LIFELONG LEARNING FOR TODAY'S LEADERS

By SANDY CLARKE
sandy.clarke@leaderonomics.com

N today's fast-paced world, where everything seems to be changing before our eyes, it can feel almost impossible for some to develop their capability in making use of new technologies, or to learn beyond their current skillset.

Actually, there has been a time when people didn’t see the world as fast-paced and constantly evolving?

While this may provide a convenient excuse to avoid stepping out of our comfort zones (particularly for established leaders), the reality for those of us in business is that we have to stay sharp nowadays just to keep up with the game, let alone get ahead of it.

A prime example of our tendency to keep our heads buried in the "way things have always been done" hole lies in game-based learning.

I would wager that more than a few senior managers and chief executive officers (CEOs) will either be thinking something along the lines of, “Game-based learning? What can I learn from video games?” or wondering, “What on earth is this game-based learning nonsense? I have a business to run!”

In reality, video games arguably produce better results than can be nurtured in traditional classroom settings.

PLAYING THE GAME
In the spirit of research, I decided to put to the test the idea that game-based learning inspires and motivates people to learn. And so I downloaded a puzzle game to my phone. It looked like it would be a headache – I predicted it wouldn’t last more than two days before I deleted it.

Indeed, one of the reasons I decided to become a journalist was because I knew I was fairly hopeless with numbers and problem-solving.

It wasn’t because I couldn’t solve the problems (I performed very well in physics class, but was very poor in math class) – it was because I got bored too easily. Like a number of my classmates – some of whom now own businesses – if something didn’t hold my attention, I just wasn’t interested.

I’ve been playing the puzzle game now for more than two weeks and have downloaded more. In fact, I spend a half-hour most nights trying to reach subsequent levels as a way to unwind – I actually look forward to solving each new problem. Fifteen-year-old me would be horrified.

Nevertheless, from my own experience, the findings on game-based learning seem to ring true: it overcomes the problem of boredom in learning, it ignites the desire to learn, and it equips us with new insights and abilities in our approach to solving problems, which can then be used and applied in the workplace.

STEP OUT THE COMFORT ZONE
Human beings love stability through patterns and routines. Who among CEOs hasn’t been aware of someone who has been left scratching their head, wondering why their business model that worked well for a team of 10 no longer works for a team of 100? “We did it this way before and got results – why not now?”

As one 19th century geologist observed, animals who are best able to adapt to changes in their environment are those who are most likely to thrive in their new environment.

Darwinian Theory can be loosely applied to business: in order to get the best from your workforce and from yourself – the ability to adapt to new ways of doing things is vital if you want to ensure an enduring reign of success for your business.

New concepts such as e-learning and learning through games (e.g. flight simulators) may render senior managers apprehensive and skeptical – but these concepts are the future of learning, and will become more refined as time rolls on.

It’s important that leaders who we constantly seek to expand our knowledge and skills – who can say they know and can do even a fraction of what they are capable?

In stepping outside our comfort zones, we not only practise what we preach, we are provided with the benefit of knowing just how valuable concepts like game-based learning are to our own progress, which in turn enhances the progress of our business.

There are a number of benefits to game-based learning, but it’s only by taking a courageous leap forward that we can realise those benefits and remain among the fittest of our cohorts who keenly take advantage of new technologies and methods to thrive and survive in today’s business world.

Indeed, it’s only by stepping outside our comfort zones at all that we learn to grow and cultivate successes, each greater than the last.

There are a number of examples that show how CEOs have embraced new ways to the betterment of their company – the best leaders know that they have to lead by example, which sometimes includes burying fears and putting aside outmoded practices in order to make way for new ones.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS
Game-based learning is beginning to lead the way in providing us with the kind of education that sticks.

Whether someone is looking to improve on their problem-solving skills, learn to fly a plane, learn a new language, or develop new business techniques, the chances are that game-based learning has it covered.

We all have our preferred forms of learning and views on how things should be done, but leaders should be proactive in adapting to the new world as it constantly unfolds and presents new challenges, as well as the tools to best overcome those challenges.

In addition to using game-based learning in order to improve the bottom line for business, we are being given an invaluable opportunity to make use of advances in technology that harness our innate desire to learn, and channel that desire in the most productive ways that enhance our own learning, skillset, and capabilities.
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 leadership, learning & development, talent acceleration, 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.

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

If you are an educator, business owner, HR leader or just passionate about helping others grow to their fullest potential, we want to partner with you!
**HRDF GETTING THE NATION READY FOR 2020**

**DRIVING THE POWER OF PEOPLE**

By LIM LAY HSUAN
layhsuan.lim@leaderonomics.com

The Human Resources Development Fund (HRDF) recently secured the silver award for Excellence in Mature Workforce Practices and the bronze award for Excellence in Compensation and Benefits Strategy in the third instalment of the HR Excellence Awards by Human Resources, a publication of Lighthouse Independent Media. Here, HRDF shares their story about how they have been working tirelessly behind the scenes in driving the national agenda of a developed nation by 2020 through catalysing a Malaysian workforce which is highly skilled, knowledgeable and innovative. The Leaderonomics team caught up with Lim Kah Cheng, chief corporate services of HRDF to find out more.

**GROWING WITH HRDF**

“T**

**LEAPS AND BOUNDS**

Lim noted that HRDF has grown remarkably from its establishment in 1992. Starting life as an institution that collected levy and disbursed training grants, HRDF has gone from strength-to-strength to contribute significantly in providing training and upskilling interventions to key industries in Malaysia especially the SME sector.

In 2005, HRDF was appointed by the NSDC to be the coordinating body for all SME trainings. With the establishment of the National Human Resource Centre by HRDF in 2011, the agency continues to be recognised as an institution that plays a key role in facilitating the positive development of SMEs.

Lim believes that it is sooner rather than later that HRDF will be the authority in strengthening the economic development of Malaysia, through its various value-added interventions and initiatives which supports the growth of a skilled, knowledgeable and innovative national workforce.

**HUMAN CAPITAL AND HR IN MALAYSIA**

Recent news reports have highlighted concerns from the business community that Malaysia continues to suffer from a shortage of skilled workers. To help mitigate the setback, HRDF is actively identifying key industrial needs which will subsequently be matched with qualified training providers, locally and abroad.

“We are also monitoring the quality of registered training providers to ensure training certifications are of the highest standards,” said Lim.

“As more and more employers and employees in Malaysia are recognising that HR is instrumental in engaging the right talent to deliver and achieve organisational goals and objectives with better speed and precision, HR certification programmes are fast gaining traction.”

According to Lim, there is a gradual positive shift in the HR space from being an operational entity to a strategic partner in many large organisations, although it might take longer for SMEs to embrace this shift.

**HRD AWARDS**

As the authoritative institution in enterprise learning and development, HRDF is also giving out awards at the end of the year, through their very own HRD Awards event. What makes this award different from the various HR awards out there?

Lim said: “The HRD Awards is the highest recognition in the field of HR development, awarded by HRDF under the Ministry of Human Resources. Introduced in 2001, the Award has grown in stature to becoming recognised by industry movers and shakers as one of the nation’s most prestigious.”

The occasion serves to acknowledge employers and training providers (registered with HRDF) who are actively involved in HR development at organisational and national levels.

As part of the initiative, winners of the HRD Award will be invited to be guest speakers at HRDF’s Annual Conference, HRDF’s CEO Talk Series, HR Clubs, peer mentoring series, and other related programmes.

For more information about HRDF, visit www.hrdf.com.my. To be part of the upcoming HRDF Conference, visit www.hrdfconference.com.my.

**A BRIEF ON HRDF**

**Vision:**

To be the human capital development authority in strengthening the economic development of Malaysia.

**Mission:**

Spearheading the human capital learning and development through strategic interventions that fulfil the current and future needs of the nation.

**HRDF’s commitment:**

- To create a highly competent, well-trained, knowledge and skilled workforce by expediting the current and future workforce with the latest and specific skills through retraining, up-skilling, re-skilling and cross-skilling programmes.
- To enhance the HR capabilities of SMEs.
- To increase Malaysia’s competitiveness in the global market by intensifying productivity and efficiency of its workforce.

**HRDF’s roles and functions:**

- To assess and determine the types and extent of training and retraining needed by employees, apprentices and trainees in keeping pace with the HR needs of various industries.
- To promote and stimulate manpower training.
- To determine the terms and conditions under which any financial assistance or other benefits are to be given.
The Benefits of Game-Based Learning

Virtual Learning is the Key to Enhancing Critical Skills and Performance

**By Ling Seng Shan**

1. **What is Game-Based Learning?**
   - Game-based learning is a method of using games to teach students a particular set of skills, or help them to achieve specific learning outcomes. Many people confuse game-based learning with gamification.

2. **Game-Based Learning: An Introduction**
   - Game-based learning helps players to establish basic knowledge before developing more complex knowledge. To complete the high-level goal, there’s a need to draw on all the knowledge and experience gained up to that point. Clear goals are set for all players, which they have to achieve if they are to complete the game.
   - The virtual environment that the business world, we can say that employers who have clear goals and directions will be much more likely to benefit than organisation than those who have unclear goals.
   - To develop such a business world, we can say that employers who have clear goals and directions will be much more likely to benefit than organisation than those who have unclear goals.

3. **Ways Games Aid Learning**
   - When we are learning new things, we need some sort of feedback. Games provide knowledge, from hands-on to more complex skills, where students may have to wait some time before receiving any feedback at all.
   - In a traditional setting, grades can provide students with some very basic feedback on how they have performed in the exam, but games provide a much richer feedback because it doesn’t present any real risk to students with regard to performance.
   - By the time grades are awarded, it’s too late for the student to do anything to correct their mistakes. With that in mind, it’s imperative that ongoing feedback is given while the learning is taking place. Game-based learning provides the perfect platform with regard to continual feedback.

4. **Learning from Mistakes**
   - The “learn by doing” approach has numerous benefits, as occurs in traditional classroom-based learning, where students may have to wait some time before receiving any feedback at all.
   - In a traditional setting, grades can provide students with some very basic feedback on how they have performed in the exam, but games provide a much richer feedback because it doesn’t present any real risk to students with regard to performance.

5. **Learning is Progressive**
   - Games create a learning environment where progress is continuous, not necessarily linear. Players are allowed to learn at their own pace to master basic knowledge before progressing to more difficult concepts.
   - It’s not like traditional classroom learning, where students are often required to work through more difficult concepts at a pace that is dictated by the teacher.

6. **Gamification**
   - Gamification describes the use of game elements in a non-game setting. This has numerous benefits, as occurs in traditional classroom-based learning, where students may have to wait some time before receiving any feedback at all.
   - In a traditional setting, grades can provide students with some very basic feedback on how they have performed in the exam, but games provide a much richer feedback because it doesn’t present any real risk to students with regard to performance.

7. **Structured Simulations and Models**
   - Structured simulations and models are often used in games because they can provide students with some useful experiences on how to do what to do in the real world.
   - Although games may not always lead to real-world results, they can provide students with some useful experiences on how to do what to do in the real world.

8. **Conclusion**
   - When we are learning new things, we need some sort of feedback. Games provide knowledge, from hands-on to more complex skills, where students may have to wait some time before receiving any feedback at all.
   - In a traditional setting, grades can provide students with some very basic feedback on how they have performed in the exam, but games provide a much richer feedback because it doesn’t present any real risk to students with regard to performance.
GAMERS have been reveling in an iconic game for more than two decades and are still going strong, with over 5.6 million subscribers worldwide—quite an impressive feat. I’m, of course, referring to World of Warcraft (WoW).

WoW is a Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game (MMORPG). MMORPGs are games where you usually start out mostly broke, with very little sense of where you are in a gigantic world, and most living things are out to get you. Sounds like real life, right? I was immediately sucked into this virtual world of WoW, where I live as a warlock. Like most newcomers, I started out feeling lost but as I levelled up, I felt this sense of accomplishment as I learned a new set of skills. I travelled far exploring new territory, and I began trading and auctioning in order to earn a living.

As I look back, here are some things I believe businesses can learn from WoW:

1. GAIN EXPERIENCE
In WoW, your fundamental goal is to accumulate experience points. This is the basic performance measurement, as players are required to perform a variety of tasks that become more challenging as the game progresses.

As the levels get higher, the complexity of challenges and the experience points needed to advance also increase. At this point, experienced players become adept at leveraging the resources available around the world to quickly learn and advance, even if the challenge becomes more difficult.

Compare this to the business environment, where we often encounter diminishing returns in learning: players in WoW appear to have increasing returns to learning.

This might be irrelevant to core business areas, but WoW has succeeded in creating a powerful platform for learning without the need to constantly motivate or train the players. Businesses could use many of the approaches used by WoW to improve performance more rapidly in their own organisations.

The key lesson here for executives is to reduce barriers to entry and to early advancement.

The valuable simplicity of WoW lies in the fact that anyone can join and quickly gain a sense of accomplishment. Any newbie can follow with the task given in the beginning, which sees them evolving rapidly in their game environments as they climb the ladder.

2. IMPROVE PERFORMANCE
WoW has a dashboard that provides clear and rich metrics to assess performance. These are all real-time data of the broader group in real time.

Detailed performance metrics ensure that real-time performance feedback helps players to focus their innovation in game play on the areas with the greatest impact. Isn’t it time we leveraged each and everyone’s strengths to achieve greater heights?

3. FACE CHALLENGES
Developers and designers of WoW have struck an amazing balance in constructing an environment that continually challenges players to develop new skills, while keeping the challenges calibrated to the existing capabilities of players to avoid frustration.

Complacency and boredom are rarely encountered. There’s always an achievement line-up next in sight to motivate the players to invest the time and effort necessary to achieve the next level of performance.

Companies that seek to pursue high growth strategies could use the same concept in providing a continuing set of new challenges to drive innovation in the organisation.

4. ENCOURAGE MOTIVATION
WoW has built a great system to encourage motivation within oneself. In the context of business incentives, it always boils down to cash.

The designers of WoW focused on intrinsic motivations instead. As soon as you master a new skill or successfully complete a new challenge, the player gets a widespread recognition. This achievement is then displayed on your profile for future references.

These players then learn to collaborate to "guilid," Think of guilds as companies. Players will have to work together to innovate in their game play and achieve the next level of performance.

A character in WoW named Garrosh Hellscream said it best: "I will burn away any remnants of weakness within us. When death arrives, will you stand and face it or kneel in defeat?" Guilds promote relationships and trust; the desire to not let the team down and increase the players to innovate to succeed.

5. INCREASE KNOWLEDGE
WoW provides opportunities to develop tacit knowledge and build platforms for broader knowledge exchange. The game play creates an environment, where close-knit guild members are required to generate deeper knowledge—the kind of knowledge that cannot be easily developed through shared practice.

The rich ecology of online forums generated by players who share their experiences enables players to address new challenges and learn from each other.

Forums provide a "pull" platform, where players encountering unanticipated needs can quickly reach out and assemble helpful resources.

The corporate environment could benefit greatly from this practice by identifying participations of individuals in these forums. In fact, these forums have become a primary vehicle to recruit high-performing players into guilds.

6. CREATE OPPORTUNITIES
Guild participation is a must. Players who move into more advanced levels will soon realise they cannot accomplish the tasks without collaborating with others with complementary skills.

Organisations value good teams, but how many of these teams are self-organised? Companies can significantly increase the accountability and motivation of teams by giving them autonomy to recruit new hires and exclude participants who are not carrying their weight.

7. PROVIDE FEEDBACK
Detailed performance metrics specific to the individual, role and guild, provide a foundation for regular after-action reviews.

This provides a platform on how players can do better to narrow the performance gap in order for the team to progress.

Three-hundred-and-sixty degree performance reviews based on objective, quantified performance metrics ensure that everyone from the guild leader down to the newest member receives feedback.

Players who want to avoid being sidelined in future initiatives will have a strong incentive to address performance gaps.

Corporate settings could certainly learn a thing or two from this model of constant feedback.

8. GRANT REWARDS
WoW has a compelling environment that attracts participants to foster new dispositions that enhance and reward their dedication over time.

Players are encouraged to seek out new challenges as an opportunity to innovate. Gamers learn to welcome unexpected events and thrive in a world of increasing uncertainty.

This creates an amplifying effect through the game.

Better players naturally gravitate towards each other, and they end up performing better.

By modelling this method, there’s no doubt that organisations would be in a better position to recruit employees who can help them to grow, accelerate and thrive in a world of increasing uncertainty.

James Lee was born to dance and is adventurous by nature. He is a treehugger by accident, an artist by blood and a photographer by profession. He is also a true Blue Leaderonomer.
Destructive Leadership

Understanding the Traits That Cultivate Bad Leaders

By DANIEL RUSSELL

Destructive leadership has become an important issue around the world for political, business, and non-governmental organisations. However, much of the advice and case studies only focus on improving the skills of good leaders.

In today’s climate, it’s just as important to understand how to prohibit destructive leadership from damaging your organisation. Likewise, most leadership articles focus on the person. However, context is a vital consideration.

Leadership is not a person – a leader is a person. Leadership involves followers and other external forces. Thus, it’s critical to take into account both a leader’s characteristics and the environment of that leader, to best identify ways to avoid destructive leadership.

Types of Destructive Leaders

There are three main types of destructive leaders:

1. Narcissistic
2. Machiavellian
3. Incompetent

Narcissistic Leaders

While it is easy to envision narcissistic leaders throughout history, they are not easy to spot in the moment. Furthermore, it’s important to remember that there is a spectrum of narcissistic leader types, from those who are simply confident, to the arrogant, to the dangerously self-centred. They are often characterised as charismatic, self-absorbed, and sometimes even psychopathic.

These leaders put their own self-interest above organisational goals and the common good. Narcissistic tendencies drive the corrupt leader to believe that he or she is a special person with a unique destiny to fulfill and is entitled to the special treatment and wealth that comes along with the abuse of power.

Sepp Blatter, former president of FIFA, is an example of a corrupt leader who abused his power to enrich himself and his close allies. Reports suggest that corruption and bribery had been going on for years within FIFA.

In extreme cases, narcissistic leaders may actually be psychopaths – that deadly mix of narcissism, shallow emotions, anti-social tendencies and a penchant for risk-taking. Hitler, organised crime bosses and violent workplace bullies are examples of psychopathic leaders.

Machiavellian Leaders

Machiavellianism is a potentially destructive leader type that is characterised by the saying “the ends justify the means”.

The concept was born out of Niccolò Machiavelli’s 1532 treatise entitled ‘The Prince’ where he describes the need to engage in ruthless behaviour to maintain power for the overall benefit of society.

Machiavellian leaders will mistrust groups seen as subservient or as potential threats to power, in order to maintain security or achieve some grand vision.

Although Machiavellianism is often talked about as being almost the same as narcissism and psychopathy, in reality, it is quite distinct.

Machiavellian leaders are motivated by their view of what’s best for the group while psychopaths are motivated purely by selfishness.

Although the motives are different, Machiavellians can behave in ways that are just as destructive as corrupt leaders. Indeed, truly terrifying leaders are often a combination of both.

Incompetent Leaders

Incompetence is another type of destructive leader. Sadly, these leaders may have good intentions and be kind-hearted, yet make terrible mistakes that destroy organisations and harm individuals.

These leaders may even be duped by trusted advisers into making bad decisions that benefit a few while doing great harm to many.

We have all known leaders whom we liked and thought were “nice” but had been promoted beyond their level of competence. It is unfortunate to see these individuals struggle alone when everyone around them clearly sees the right decision to make.

Identifying Destructive Leaders

Organisations can avoid massive problems by identifying destructive leaders before they obtain power. The use of thorough leadership assessment to select leaders will reduce the chances of hiring or promoting a destructive leader.

However, the usual types of leader assessment are not designed to identify destructive leaders. Narcissistic and psychopathic leaders often charm recruiters and interviewers with their confidence and flat tyre.

Likewise, Machiavellians will seem to have pure motives and passion to do good. Even incompetent leaders may be given the benefit of the doubt because they are friendly and likeable.

However, trained psychologists with experience assessing destructive leaders can identify those with negative tendencies.

Conducive Environments

While destructive leaders are very dangerous, there are situational factors that can reduce or exacerbate the scope of destruction.

Recent research has found three environmental factors which are more conducive to the rise of destructive leadership: perceived threat, cultural values, and organisational norms.

Destructive leaders often take advantage of instability to create a perception of imminent threat. When people feel threatened, they are more willing to give away personal freedom and accept oppressive leadership.

For example, former US president George W. Bush was able to use the instability and feelings of imminent threat to begin the American “War on Terror” as well as the second Gulf War in 2003.

It is important to note that these threats do not need to be real, only perceived. Destructive leaders frequently play up biases to create fear and gain power.

Additionally, destructive leaders are more likely to emerge in cultures that avoid uncertainty and confrontation, that are collectivistic and have high power distance. Such cultures prefer strong leaders who bring people together and in part, absorb individuals from the responsibility of working out their conflicts directly.

Furthermore, high power distance cultures tend to be more tolerant of large discrepancies in wealth, education, and power. Followers in these types of cultures are more susceptible to destructive leadership and likely to conform.

Norms and systems at the organisational level have a strong influence on curtailing destructive leaders.

We know through research and experience that destructive leaders are drawn to positions with low supervision, frequent risk-taking, and high visibility (such as sales, investment trading, and senior leadership).

Having independent governance with a series of checks and balances, is crucial to avoid damage by destructive leaders. Perhaps even more important is to install a culture of accountability and ownership rather than depend on “policies” or “systems” to force compliance.

Centralised governance systems that rely on the top of the organisation lead to over-dependence and weakening of critical thought and expression of opposing views.

Systems with decentralised, autonomous units foster greater accountability and are more effective at blocking destructive acts.

Concluding Thoughts

Clearly, destructive leadership has tremendous ability to negatively impact individuals, teams, companies, and nations.

These leaders are frequently charismatic, manipulative and skilled at taking advantage of the culture.
SERIOUS GAMES TO HELP LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

By HELEN ROUTLEDGE
editor@leaderonomics.com

Leadership, like many other soft topics which are classed as critical skills, is a tough nut to crack. There is only so much theory you can learn about a soft skill before you need to bite the bullet and head out to the real world to practise your newfound knowledge.

Therein lies the challenge: to practise leadership skills, you need people to lead and these people may not be immediately available. And to top it off, if you turn out to be a poor leader, you risk widespread damage among the team.

So, how can we address leadership development using games? Or to put it another way, how can a game produce a better leader? Using the lessons Totem Learning learned from a multiplayer leadership game, I want to share the top tips on how games can help build this critical skill.

Here are the top three areas where I believe games can benefit leadership development:

- Allowing practising of skills
- Observing emerging leadership skills
- Evaluating leadership capabilities

These three aspects formed the foundation for a leadership game which I absolutely enjoyed designing.

From my own perspective, when I sit down to design a leadership game, it is really important that every person in that game has the opportunity to become a leader at least one point in the game. I don’t want to create a game where there is one leader and the rest of the team members are forced to be followers.

So that was my first challenge. How was I going to create an environment where there were multiple leaders? We all have our strengths and weaknesses, and as our jobs evolve over time, so that idea really set the foundation for the structure and flow of the game.

I knew I wanted to create a scenario where the game changed, roles were fluid and opportunities were aplenty for those willing to grab them.

DEFINING THE ROLE

The incorporated design changes the nature of the connections between the team members throughout the experience. They begin as single players, isolated from one another and so, there is great individual responsibility. Gradually, we build mini teams by introducing players to one another over time, before connecting them all together into one team.

The benefit of this design is that each player makes his or her own conclusions about the environment, even though every player starts off with the same experience. This is a great eye-opener on how each of the team members set about working individually and reading their environments.

INTRODUCE MULTIPLE GOALS

As in the real world, leaders have to balance differing priorities and goals. In our game design, we represent this through personal and team goals through setting up of an initial competitive environment, where you are in a race against other players to reach the goal.

Over time, we introduce the concept that the final goal cannot be achieved alone. It is very interesting to see how players react to sacrificing their personal gain for the benefit of the team.

EXPLORING BEHAVIOURS

Throughout the game, players are faced with the overarching goal of escape and completion, but they also encounter a series of challenging puzzles along the way to push their individual coaching, team and leadership skills. Time pressure is applied to these situations where the faster the problem is addressed, the more points the team received. In addition to pressurised situations, non-pressurised situations are included, where players will have time to solve problems. Using mixed situations, we could thus assess how each player behaved differently.

SOLID FOUNDATION

Throughout the design, we underpinned the game design with a foundation of leadership development strategy, crafted by subject-matter experts. Leadership is about getting others to do things by creating an environment whereby progress is possible. In our game design, progress is not possible unless players cooperate and set aside personal gain for the good of the team.

We built in situations where innovative responses are required from the players, often under pressure, in unfamiliar situations. Influencing skill was an essential ability team members required, in order to ensure a high score. Another critical aspect of leadership is coaching—a method of directing, instructing and training a person or group of people, with the aim to achieve some goal or develop specific skills. We built in specific scenarios, where users had to coach others through situations. These puzzles involved:

- Identifying goals
- Removing obstacles
- Generating options
- Planning actions
- Acting on the plan

It is important for us to give everyone an opportunity to coach, and so we provide opportunities to repeat use of skills and practice within new contexts, therefore reinforcing strategies and behaviours.

Problem-solving is a core component to the game. A definition of problem-solving is that an individual or a team applies knowledge, skills and understanding to achieve a desired outcome(s) in an unfamiliar situation. Problem-solving is central to many games and underpins many of the design decisions we make.

We want our players to objectively identify possible causes of a problem and then propose potential, often creative, solutions to the team. The great thing about using problem-solving in games is that it leads to permanent information retention, because you come to the conclusion yourself. You make your own connections, rather than being told the correct answer. Problem-solving is the opposite of memorisation, where information is often forgotten after testing.

The final component that is important to our foundation is that we had to make the players feel part of a team quickly. We had to give the players a common purpose to which to align their efforts to. This is achieved through the use of the storyline, subtle repetition throughout the game of the need to work together, the gradual connection of players in the overall team, and the gradual increase in levels of difficulty, thereby building camaraderie.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

An experimental environment is no good without guidance and feedback. Because we want this game to be used without the need for a facilitator to be present, we had to make sure the game provides all the feedback that is needed. Through the process of highlighting successes and learning from mistakes, we were able to bring about a new level of personal effectiveness.
**Q&A WITH NORA ABD MANAF**

**HR TALK**

The best thing that a woman in a leadership role can do to promote equality and inclusivity, I would have to say, is to have a strong knowledge of what the situation is within her organisation and its work climate. With that knowledge, they should have a strong personal commitment to proactively sponsor and drive initiatives to fill the gaps and complement the current infrastructure.

As a leader, you have influence and access to be able to do so. This ensures focused, targeted, real results can be quickly achieved.

Especially in organisations that are either relatively new or just beginning to roll out programmes and policies that tackle equality and inclusivity issues using data, thorough analysis of comprehensive data will steer the right decisions on what to offer and prioritise.

In Malaysia, about 50 women in every 100 are not in employment. The country’s 54% female workforce ratio is among the lowest in the region, as other countries such as Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam have more than a 60% female labour participation rate. This situation exists despite there being a majority of women graduating from institutions of higher education.

Countless studies have proved that a higher rate of women’s participation in the workforce will result in higher Gross Domestic Product. Under the 11th Malaysia Plan, the target is to raise women’s participation rate from 36.6% in 2014 to 59% by 2020. To realise this, businesses need to respond and stay updated on the evolving workplace trends and demands. We need to constantly find new ways of working to attract and retain our talents, and help them integrate their life and work successfully.

**Q: WHAT IS THE BEST THING THAT A WOMAN IN A LEADERSHIP ROLE CAN DO TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY?**

We have in place, a People Management and Development infrastructure that ensures true diversity and inclusion are promoted:

- A comprehensive People Dashboard introduced since 2009 which include tracking gender representation and diversity in talents for peak performance.
- The launch of the Group Inclusiveness and Diversity Agenda (GIDA) in March 2014 to ensure greater representation of women in leadership positions across the Group.
- The formalisation of Flexible Work Arrangement (FWA) in 2013. 67% of the population now on FWA are women. The FWA is part of the contributing factors that have resulted in the improved key retention rate from 52% in 2009 to 86% in 2014.
- A first of its kind in Malaysia, the Maybank Tiger Cub Centre was introduced in 2013 to provide emergency childcare service for the staff of Maybank. Another example of how we ensure full inclusion is that we promote mother-child bonding, even while at work, where we have designated breastfeeding rooms for mothers.
- The Maybank Mentoring Programme launched in 2013 is to provide focused development support to our high potential talents to accelerate their development and performance. It has paired 132 women mentees with 47 mentors from senior management.
- The launch of Maybank Women Mentor Women Programme in 2013 to develop future leaders among women has paired women mentees with 35 mentors from senior management.
- The Women Mentor Women Council launched in 2013 is aimed to increase the number of women in top management. The Council, however, also has a set of business targets to deliver, directly supporting business growth.

We do not alleviate any one gender, but we tap on their contributions and talents and provide an environment where they are able to contribute successfully. The Women Mentor Women Council is just an example how we work as a good team in Maybank – leveraging on each other’s strengths and experiences to grow and develop ourselves. I personally believe these provisions or benefits enable women to work at their full potential, and make substantial and lasting contributions to the organisation.

**FEMALE bosses are in a unique position to lean in and make a difference in how their organisations treat female employees. What are the modern solutions that an organisation can apply that empowers the women in its workforce, without alienating the men?**

Some examples of good practices that we are beginning to see in Malaysia are flexi-work arrangements, telecommuting, on-site day care, and many other special initiatives that are designed to provide employees with work-life balance.

In this special column, we ask Nora Abd Manaf, group chief human capital officer of Maybank, to give her take on why women leaders shoulder a unique responsibility in how women should be treated in their organisation.

**IN MAYBANK GROUP TODAY, I'M PROUD THAT OUR FEMALE WORKFORCE STANDS AT 54% AND ARE THEREFORE KEY CONTRIBUTORS TO THE ORGANISATION’S SUCCESS. WE HAVE PUT CONCRETE MEASURES TO ACCELERATE OUR GENDER DIVERSITY AND OUR EFFORTS HAVE EXCEEDED GLOBAL BENCHMARKS.**

Targets are incorporated in the Maybank Talent Review and Succession Planning process, where we identify and bring women talents to the surface, and successors for talent programmes, as well as to assume bigger roles. This has resulted in our female representation in management positions growing from 38% in 2009 to 46% in 2014. Women in top management positions increased from 15.68% in 2009 to 31% in 2014 and women in the succession planning pool for critical positions increased from 19% in 2010 to 35.1% 2014.

**WHAT ARE THE MODERN SOLUTIONS THAT AN ORGANISATION CAN APPLY THAT EMPOWERS THE WOMEN IN ITS WORKFORCE, WITHOUT ALIENATING THE MEN?**

Parents, are you struggling to connect with your teenager?

Every parent wishes to have a great relationship with their teenager. They want to be “the best friend” or “the confidant” so that they can know what goes on in their child’s life. But in order to do so, parents first need to have good communication skills to build a close relationship with their teenager.

Join us as we Unlock the Barriers of Communication with Your Teen. This two-hour parent workshop will be filled with a variety of exercises to help you learn and solve.

Sign up now before it’s too late! Let’s start building and creating a stronger relationship in your family today.

**WE NEED TO STRONGER RELATIONSHIP IN YOUR FAMILY TODAY.**

**31 OCTOBER 2015 (SATURDAY) 10AM – 12PM @HELP UNIVERSITY**

Sign up at www.leaderonomics.com/parentworkshop or email jean.selvam@leaderonomics.com
BRING YOUR POKÉMON TO WORK
CULTIVATING VALUES AND LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE POKÉMON GAMES

By SARA YEE
editor@leaderonomics.com

Was seven when I laid eyes on my first ever videogame console—a Gameboy Advance—which my father had bought for me as a gift. Along with it came the Pokémon Crystal version—my first game.

Now more than a decade later, I am still playing these games. Technology has granted them an ability to look better with the advent of 3D models, starting with the X and Y versions, but the essential gameplay remains the same.

Perhaps the one thing that I like a lot about this franchise is the collectability factor of the games.

In addition, the lessons embedded throughout the generations of games—while marketed towards children—holds lessons that even adults can heed.

SOMETIMES WE HAVE THINGS THRUST UPON US—WHAT DO WE DO THEN?

The main timeline games always have a villain team set out to carry out nefarious goals for their own ends, and the player character has to defeat these bad guys and perhaps save a world or two.

I cannot spoil the stories for you (what fun is there in that?) but the gist of it is that most of these villains have a plan in mind, and they will do anything to achieve these ends. It’s up to you, the player, to stop them.

When something important is thrust upon you, and perhaps has nothing to do with your initial goal but is still important towards the community or the people around you, what do you do?

Take it in your stride, because what you do can lead to a greater improvement for the community at large. Sometimes as leader, one has to be prepared for unexpected moments, where leadership is needed and uncertain moments like these are exactly what calls for effective leadership.

A leader needs to think on their feet and gather split-second resources in order to complete this goal.

FACING CHALLENGES ONE STEP AT A TIME

Journeying into the game, a Pokémon player is required to defeat progressively difficult trainers, collecting badges from eight elemental gyms and ultimately challenging the Hall of Fame, the most difficult challenge in the game.

Once at the Hall of Fame, one has to challenge the Elite Four, a series of four of the most powerful trainers in the land. You would think it’s over at this point but, as you clear the last Elite Four member, the gates open to reveal the strongest of them all—The Champion.

Surmounting the challenge that The Champion presents, and the realisation when you beat him or her is one of pure joy as one has gone up the ranks towards being a better trainer.

Just like in the game, taking small challenges initially—ones within your capability—and slowly working towards larger and more challenging goals is the way to progress.

As you and your team get better, you will be able to achieve the most challenging of goals because years of experience and failure have trained you to be the very best.

Despite this, never stop working towards your goals regardless of where you are in life. Rome was not built in a day.

TRUSTING YOUR TEAM AND GIVING THEM ROOM TO GROW

This essential part of the game is about controlling a team of six Pokémon to fight towards the ultimate goal of beating The Champion and, along the way, collecting every creature that the game has to offer.

By training your Pokémon and beating each challenge that comes before you, one bonds with your companions and thus they slowly learn to trust you and follow you.

As with any organisation, leaders have to pick their members accordingly and adopt a hands-off approach (the latter is unlike the game) that allows for them to grow at their own pace in their own time in order to achieve what the organisation needs. Autonomy is key. Give them the task and then get out of the way.

At the same time, get to know your members and figure out where their strengths and weaknesses lie, and work towards strengthening the former and working upon the latter.

CREDITS

This game has taught me over the years that progressive leadership is the way forward. There will be tests set upon you and unexpected challenges put in your way, but if you have right means and capabilities, you will beat these challenges with ease.

Regardless, if Rocket or Flare stand in your way, or if the hallways of the Elite Four are before you, endure, persevere, and you will reach the end.

Forged by fire, tempered by leadership, these qualities will allow you to defeat those unexpected challenges and endure every test of your character.

The Champion is in sight. Keep on going.