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**WORK TRENDS**

LIKE biological evolution, transformation within business can be a slow, and often messy affair. Take, for example, the eight-hour working day. During the industrial revolution in Britain, the average working day ranged from 10–16 hours, designed to maximise factory efficiency and output.

One fellow, named Robert Owen, spearheaded a movement to reduce the number of hours worked, campaigning with his famous slogan, “Eight hours’ labour, eight hours’ recreation, eight hours’ rest.” Nearly 200 years on, many businesses still subscribe to the fixed working day, despite major advances in technology, changes in lifestyle, and how business is now practised on a global scale.

CEOs and senior managers remain attached to the notion that more hours worked equals more output via productivity, which in turn means greater returns for business. We even have practices such as flex-time, which works well under necessary circumstances, but can – as studies suggest – lead to a lack of productivity, as people feel they have more time to get things done.

Indeed, Sweden is moving to implement a six-hour working day in order to boost productivity, with the added bonus of providing more free time for employees (which helps boost creativity and innovation). As one Swedish CEO, Linus Feldt, puts it, “To stay focused on a specific work task for eight hours is a huge challenge. In order to cope, we mix in things like breaks to make the work day more endurable. At the same time, we are finding it hard to manage our private life outside of work.”

In one global report this year, it was suggested that the top issue of concern for 87% of human resources and business leaders is employee engagement (up from 79% last year). This reflects previous studies, which have found that up to 80% of employees feel disengaged from their work – a staggering statistic.

If we are to drive progress forward and, in Malaysia’s case, achieve socio-economic targets to deliver a high-income nation, business leaders will have to focus on cultivating innovative ways to lead and develop leaders of the future. Doubtless, there is potential for Malaysia to play an influential role on the global stage, but there is also an urgent need to transform the ideals and theories into sustainable practices that can help deliver the economic success the nation craves.

Have a good weekend everyone,
SANDY
Editor
Leaderonomics.com

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**IS YOUR COMPANY LOSING ITS SOUL?**

By LIM LAY HSUAN
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DELOITTE’S South-East Asia Human Capital Trends 2015 reported that culture and engagement is the third most significant human capital issue in this region. Globally, employee engagement is the No. 3 concern.

In a new world of work, where organisational structure is becoming less hierarchical, transparency – also termed “the naked organisation” – is key to attracting and retaining top talent.

The millennials entering the workforce are looking for an enriching experience in companies, where they can contribute meaningfully and purposefully. In other words, they are looking for companies with “soul” experience.

**SOULED-OUT**

You feel it in your gut if a company has a soul. After all, at the heart of every organisation is a mission and a purpose that has a soul. After all, at the heart of every organisation is a mission and a purpose that has a soul. Perhaps companies such as AirAsia, Starbucks and Google spring to mind.

And this is where the company’s soul comes alive, because of the people in the organisation who truly believe in fulfilling a higher purpose through core values and corporate culture.

**SOUL-SEARCHING**

The Deloitte report further states that senior leadership must take a proactive role in defining and embodying the company’s soul before it’s too late.

If leaders fail to nurture and feed the corporate soul, like a deprived garden, it will “die” eventually.

The following are some hard questions to answer, so that leaders can take the necessary steps to save the company’s soul before it’s too late (adapted from balmsglobalbusiness.com):

- Are your people too busy to make time to do the little things they used to do in the past?
- Do the leaders find it easier to hire external people than to grow people from within?
- Do the leaders now view process and procedure as more important than people development and progression?
- Does management have a philosophy that people work for the company rather than with the company?
- Is the company’s success now defined by what it has done, rather than what could be done?

**CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

Organisational soul plays an important role in determining employee value proposition. With evolving employee motivations, companies need to start treating employees as customers, and not just mere minions hired to work solely for organisational benefits.

The question leaders should ask themselves is, “How is our corporate soul today?”

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**BUILDING YOUR BRAND**

PERSONAL branding is a concept that promotes the idea of putting your best self forward for personal and professional development.

By learning how to create your brand, you will be able to leverage on your strengths to actively and confidently achieve the goals you set for yourself and take up opportunities presented to you. Prema Jayabalans of Leaderonomics shares her take on this subject.

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The opinions expressed in this career guide are those of the writers or the people they quoted and not necessarily those of Leaderonomics.
10 Differences Between Being A Leader And A Boss by Emmila Hastings, Buzzfeed.com

**BOSS VS LEADER**

1. **BOSS VS LEADER**

A boss tells people what to do in a domineering manner, while a leader helps you do it.

2. **BOSS LOOK DOWN ON PEOPLE, LEADERS LOOK STRAIGHT AT THEM**

Leaders succeed by using eye contact and taking the time to listen to co-workers. Bosses often look down on people, dismissive of what they need and/or what they ask for.

3. **BOSSES SAY “I”, LEADERS SAY “WE”**

With leaders, you’re a team. They give and/or what they ask for.

4. **BOSSES SAY TELL, LEADERS SHOW**

Leaders provide a healthy learning environment, encouraging teaching and learning. Bosses tell their employees what to do and don’t usually explain how to do it.

5. **LEADERS ARE LISTENERS**

The best kinds of leaders listen to other people. They recognise knowledge and wisdom are gained by listening. The best leaders possess the ability to understand what is not said, witnessed, or heard, and come through with promises.

6. **BOSS COMMAND, LEADERS ASK**

Leaders show respect toward their colleagues and ask for them to carry out tasks. Bosses frequently command their colleagues and ask for them to carry out tasks. Bosses frequently command their colleagues and ask for them to carry out tasks.

7. **BOSSES RELY ON AUTHORITY**

Leaders depend on being the head of their field. Without power, they have nothing to fall back on. Leaders, on the other hand, rely on their goodwill and nothing to fall back on. Leaders, on the other hand, rely on their goodwill and nothing to fall back on.

8. **LEADERS SHOW RESPONSIBILITY**

Leaders take blame for things when they mess up. Bosses commonly blame others for issues and dilemmas in the work place.

9. **LEADERS ARE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATORS**

Leaders are more likely to be trusted and respected if they’re effective communicators. Facial expressions, hand motions, body posture and eye movement all affect the way a person comes across. Most people pay more attention to emotion and actions rather than words being said.

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**ARE BOSSES LEADERS?**

**IMPORTANT CHARACTERISTICS TO DRIVE BUSINESS FORWARD**

**GENERATIONAL LEADERSHIP**

While the replies of “yes boss” continue to be heard, the fact of the matter is we want a leader, not a boss. More importantly, we want a leader who can fit into today’s global organisation to navigate a “new world of work” – one that requires a dramatic change in strategies for leadership, talent and human resources (HR).

But firstly, what kind of leadership do we have?

The baby boomers and Gen-X had a completely different lifestyle and perspective in virtues, shaped by the economy, cultural values and technology of the time. It was a culture of keeping your nose to the grind and following the pecking order. Can Gen-Y, who has grown up in a more technologically advanced and entitled environment with its YOLO (you only live once) values, adapt to the same leadership style?

It is not surprising that organisations around the world are struggling to strengthen their leadership pipelines, especially in their ability to develop millennial leaders. It will be even more vital for the upcoming leader to be able to connect across these generations of employees to bring out the best in them. The current trend of succession planning is more often a sporadic reaction, confining development to a selected few employees, failing to make long term investments in leadership, and neglecting to build robust leadership pipelines.

The irony is that while organisations may recognise the need for successors, they do not always implement effective leadership development.

According to the Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends 2015: Leading in the new world of work report, many organisations view leadership development as a short term training programme or series of episodic events that are funded one year, but may not be budgeted for in the next. They treat development as a luxury, but neglect the fact that high performing companies actually spend 1.5-to-two times more on leadership training in good and bad times, and reap results that are triple or quadruple the levels of their competitors.

If developing leadership is not treated as an ongoing strategic initiative by HR and the business, the leadership pipeline will be weak. This has the potential of negatively impacting the business as a whole in the long term. Even at the top of the corporate pyramid, some C-suite executives may be neglected from receiving any developments at all. Is development only for the few and not for the many?

**TAKING THE FIRST STEP**

We need a commitment from the top. The CEO must own and commit to a continuous investment in leadership development. Early planning for succession is also vital to ensure a strong foundation is built before the next chapter of the business can be effectively furthered.

Next, we ask ourselves: what is the leadership for? What are your top business priorities? Build a simple capability framework for selection, assessment, development and succession that defines the leadership you currently need, but which can also adapt and develop for the future.

However, leadership is not only confined to the top management. Strategic leaders of the future lie with the mid-level and first-level leaders. Develop inclusive leaders at all levels. An upcoming leader will have to manage employees who are remnants of baby boomers, or the majority of Gen-Y and the budding Gen-Z.

A leadership style which was regarded as successful in the past may not ultimately be the style to be adopted by the successor to fit into this new world. To keep up with the constant changes in the business landscape, a focus on leadership at all levels, coupled with consistent yearly spending in this area, is key to building sustainable performance and engaging employees in the new world of work.

And hence the final question: Are there any takers for the role of a leader? Will the chosen one be the choice of the employees, or the choice of the upper management? A dilemma at times, but it is true that selecting the right people can be difficult, as Jeffrey Cohn and Jay Moran stated in their bestseller, Why Are We Bad at Picking Good Leaders?

How do we close the gap between theory and results in selecting leaders?

The X factor in a leader is one of the few things in life which is hard to define. Ultimately, a good leader is often a combination of different characteristics; the most typical being a people person, principled, and a visionary, with the drive to make things happen.

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Ang Weina is an executive director at Deloitte Malaysia. She is also the national practice leader for Deloitte Malaysia’s Global Employer Services. The above views are her own. To connect with her, send an email to editor@leaderonomics.com
LOST IN THE MAZE?

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By PRETHIBA ESVARY
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We put three nations in the spotlight to see how they work to reverse the worrying trend

THE BRAIN DRAIN EPIDEMIC IN ASIA

With an initial plan of attaining permanent residence in New Zealand, Dr Goh Chee Leong and his wife made a life-changing decision to return to Malaysia instead, to serve their home country.

The dean of the faculty of Behavioural Sciences at HELP University revealed there were two main factors that drew them back to Malaysia.

He said, “One, we wanted to spend time with our families, as we had been away for a long time. Two, we wanted to make an impact in our country.”

Similar to Goh, there are many Malaysians who have returned to their homeland to share their talent, expertise, and experiences.

However, the issue of brain drain, that is, the emigration of skilled and intellectual individuals, continues to persist.

Goh admits that it is challenging to recruit Malaysian talents abroad, especially if they reside in developed countries, where there is a better source of income and lifestyle.

He claims the only way to reach out to these individuals is through raising awareness of the available opportunities to make an impact in a growing economy like Malaysia.

Goh also insists that Malaysians abroad who do not intend to return can still contribute to their country in other ways.

They can help by providing ideas and solutions to develop the nation, introducing particular programmes, and assisting with data collection for research studies.

Apart from Malaysia, other developing countries in Asia, such as India and China, have also been battling the brain drain phenomenon for some time.

INDIA

According to Umeose, 153,000 students go abroad every year to pursue their higher education due to “grade inflation, 100% cut-off requirements for college admissions, reservation policy and a lack of good quality education”.

Data from the National Science Foundation revealed that as of 2008, only 5.2% Indians returned to their homeland.

However, the combined effect of the dot-com boom and the global financial crisis in 2008, forced many Indians to return home.

Other reasons include the fact that some were unable to establish their own businesses or ventures in the countries they were at, and were faced with difficulties gaining visas for their relatives.

With numerous MNCs such as Google and Microsoft setting up base in India, and the growing demands in IT, pharma, biotechnology and engineering fields, numerous business and job opportunities began to open up.

Thus, many non-resident Indians (NRIs) see India as a growing economy with opportunities for growth in their careers.

In line with India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s vision to make science, technology and innovation a national priority, the government has managed to lure highly-talented NRIs back home, with placements in their Ministry of Science and Technology.

As a result, 500 scientists have returned to India in the past seven years.

The government also established The Ramanujan Fellowship, Innovation in Science Pursuit for Inspired Research programme, and the Ramalingaswamy Fellowship, to encourage the return of NRIs.

Further, efforts to boost the economy such as the “Make in India” campaign, launched by Modi last year, was established to boost business opportunities and foreign investments, which would also consequently create more job opportunities and grow the nation.

For a country that began to lose its talent two decades ago, it is a considerable achievement that India is now starting to observe a reverse in the brain drain trend.

CHINA

Since its market reform in 1978, China has seen a huge economy growth and is now the second largest economy in the world.

Yet, this country is still a developing nation. In fact, People’s Daily of China claimed last June that “China is suffering from the world’s worst brain drain.”

Data from 2013 from the Ministry of Education revealed that, out of the 8.05 million students sent abroad, 8,184,000 have returned.

Some of the reasons Chinese nationals tend to go abroad include wealthy Chinese wanting to protect their wealth, the pursuit of a better lifestyle, and to look for better job and education opportunities.

Similarly to Malaysia and India, China established numerous programmes to recruit highly talented Chinese nationals abroad.

The Chinese government also devised a medium and long-term talent development plan (2010-2020) with a goal to transform the nation from a manufacturning sector to one of innovation.

Furthermore, China’s local governments have stepped in to develop multiple talent recruitment initiatives.

Data from a study, conducted by Chinese researchers Wang Huiyao and Yue Bao, showed that as a result of these initiatives, 20,000 highly-skilled individuals returned home.

In fact, in more general terms, the number of returnees to China had moved up by 1% annually since 1995. In an interview, Wang Huiyao, president of the Centre for China and Globalisation, said that the return rate of Chinese nationals is indeed getting higher every year.

However, there are two things China needs to be cautious of. One is that the return rate for high-level talent isn’t that high, especially for those doing a PhD in the engineering and science fields in the United States.

Second, China needs to establish immigration or talent-attracting programmes to attract non-Chinese talents as well, rather than focusing on merely attracting on Chinese nationals.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Looking at our own nation Malaysia, more than 3,600 applications of Malaysians’ returnees have been approved via TalentCorp’s Returning Expert Programme (REP).

Established in 2013 under the Prime Minister’s Department, TalentCorp partners with leading employers from key economics sectors and relevant government agencies to close the critical skills gap arising from Malaysia’s economic transformation.

Aside from raising awareness of the available world-class professional opportunities in Malaysia and enabling overseas Malaysians to contribute from abroad, TalentCorp has undertaken several efforts to further facilitate the return of Malaysian professionals.

This includes the development of fast-track application process, Global Malaysians digital job board collaboration with myStarjob.com, JPA Management Apprenticeship programme and a revision of REP in April 2014.

Johan Mahmood Mensan, the CEO of TalentCorp, was quoted saying, “The overall job market remains resilient with the unemployment rate maintained at around 3% and job postings on portals such as Jobsstreet.com remaining at comparable levels to last year.”

“There continues to be demand for talent, including from export-oriented sectors, and this reflected in healthy wage growth in various occupations in demands.”

Prethiba is passionate about making a difference to the society that she was brought up in. She believes the responsibility of growing and developing Malaysia falls on every single one of us, and that it is up to us to change our perspectives, take a step forward and lead the nation in its development.

To engage with her, write to prethiba.esvary@leaderonomics.com
OVERCOMING THE GREAT MAN OBSERVATION

We all live with a leader, a visionary, they figure out all the answers, an omniscient visionary. Think Steve Jobs, Bill Gates, and Winston Churchill.

But just as we live a leader, we live in a society and it is our job to fall into the trap of thinking that an inspirational quote or a deed is all it takes to succeed. Fine, we can use a Steve Jobs, for a Jane Doe will be a Steve Jobs. Today there is an increasing need for collaborative leadership, where young professionals need to feel part of this decision-making process and shaping the overall vision.

1. Simon Sinek

Henry Charles New York north says that “Charisma, image and style have been important to leaders and serve.

Today we need to find new ways of practicing leadership, ways that involve a collaborative process of humility and service, rather than trying to be the next Great Man”.

STRIKING A BALANCE BETWEEN VISION AND REALITY

Professor Ronald Blyth, of Case Western Reserve University, says that the best leaders are those who are able to inspire through our vision, whilst at the same time providing human resources to achieve their goals.

Great leaders actually work to overcome challenges that demand progress and growth. Leaders who place all their focus on vision are almost certain to lose touch with reality. Tony Blair’s former director of communications, Alastair Campbell, describes reality. Tony Blair’s former director of communications, Alastair Campbell, describes this as “when leaders become caught up in their own bubble,” leaders are those who are able to inspire change.

Ways to Strengthen Leadership

1. STRIKING A BALANCE BETWEEN VISION AND REALITY

Successful leadership is able to present an overall vision.

Professor Richard Boyatzis, of Case Western Reserve University, advises that “charisma, image and style don’t hold of their top performers.

2. ELABORATING THE ROBUST CULTURE

A robust culture – one which provides certainty and direction within individual roles and teams.

3. OUTLINING THE DETAILS

Nailing a leader is very much necessary, but you can’t rely on what your vision is. You can’t rely on what you want to see. You must have a group of people who are able to follow you.

4. THE CHALLENGES OF MODERN DAY LEADERSHIP

H

ow exactly are businesses to move forward in the modern age of technological advancements, globalisation, and ever-evolving needs of their employees and customers?

By Sandy Clarke

Sandy Clarke is a managing director for South-East Asia (SEA).

The Challenges of Modern Day Leadership

Talking about transforming the theory into effective practice In the Workplace

The World of Work, it is suggested that ensuring a pipeline of leaders is essential to business growth and success. As such, organisations are increasingly important in South-East Asia (SEA).

From the report, leaders are offered key areas on which to focus.

1. Taking a strategic view of leadership development

Companies must view leadership as a long-term investment. Too many businesses equate leadership development with short-term training courses or a series of ad hoc events.

Many current leadership development programmes are fragmented, failing to companies to architected, yet fail to equip new leaders.

In a recent long-term, holistic approach to identify, develop and retain leaders, it is not about finding the one with all the best skills, but about having the leaders with appropriate skills are in short supply.

2. Developing a clear view of what capabilities and experiences are required for each leadership position

Finding clear expectations at each leadership level will help identify those with the potential to fill those leadership positions and dictate how to ensure that future leaders are developing the capabilities they need to succeed now and in the future.

3. Investing in data-driven leadership assessment and development tools

Companies need data to plan for succession and talent mobility to build business challenging.

Leaving a growing, data-driven approach allows for assessing and tracking leaders at all levels.

Likewise, leaders desire greater awareness of available career paths and requirements to reach the next level of leadership.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

There are easier challenges to tackle in the world of business than the development of leadership. Given that there are over 350 definitions of leadership and that research has consistently failed to meet its targets, struggles to know exactly where to begin.

The best leaders I’ve seen in action are those who proactively share not only their successes, but also their struggles – and how they overcome them.

Likewise, it’s up to successful leaders to show them that leadership isn’t just a learning process.

Sandy Clarke

Telling Is Better than Asking

While leaders often ask of others “What have you done?”, leaders who proactively share not only their successes, but also their struggles – and how they overcome them.

This sharing implies that HR is struggling to keep pace with growing business needs.

Our experience with firms around the world has shown that effective recruitment methods are increasingly ineffective at keeping pace with growing business needs.

HR ORGANIZATIONS AND PROCESSES ARE NOT KEEPING UP WITH RISING BUSINESS NEEDS

Compared with last year, the capability gap for virtually every issue increased in magnitude.

The technology gap for virtually every issue increased across the board.

Therefore, HR and business leaders who effectively intervene in the near future will be in a far better position for success across the board.

The Challenges of Modern Day Leadership

Putting theory into practice

About the author

Sandy Clarke is a managing director for South-East Asia (SEA) of Leaderonomics, an independent research think tank in the region. Leaderonomics is well known for its comprehensive approach to leadership assessment and development, as well as its work on human capital trends. The organisation is committed to providing insights and solutions to help organisations build a world-class leadership pipeline.

The author can be reached at editor@leaderonomics.com
Maintain eye contact. If you don't, many people feel that you are lying or not dependable. Do not wear dark glasses. However, be mindful that there are cultural differences regarding the role of eye contact.

Be attentive to body language. Avoid raising barriers. Don't cross your arms across your chest. Don't place anything on the desk between you and the interviewer. Avoid the appearance of withdrawing from the interviewer.

SMILE. A friendly face is more pleasant than a grim one.

BE READY TO SHAKE HANDS. Be alert and quick to respond to the interviewer both at the beginning and at the end of the interview. If the interviewer offered to shake hands at the beginning, then you offer first at the end. Grasp the offered hand firmly and maintain your grip for about two seconds.

DON'T CHew GuM. Ever.

DON'T SIT UNtIL YOU ARE INVITED TO. If you have a choice, don't sit across the room. Sit as near to the interviewer's desk as possible, and face the interviewer. Don't lean on the desk.

TOP 10 WAYS TO MAKE A POSITIVE FIRST IMPRESSION DURING JOB INTERVIEWS

BE CALM AND POISED. Avoid nervous habits. Don't cross your legs and keep the free foot moving. Don't play with your fingernails. Keep your hands off your moustache, beard, and/or hair. Don't play with jewellery, don't tap your finger on the chair arm or table. Sit up straight – don't slouch, and avoid aggravating speech habits such as “eh!”

MAINTAIN EYE CONTACT. If you don’t, many people feel that you are lying or not dependable. Do not wear dark glasses. However, be mindful that there are cultural differences regarding the role of eye contact.

CONSIDER EACH INTERVIEW A CHALLENGE. Be enthusiastic about working for that employer and about the job.

SHUT THE DOOR ON YOUR TROUBLES. Try to avoid discussions about family or financial problems. Think about what you can do for the employer.

LISTEN TO THE INTERVIEWER. Consider your answer carefully and be sure you understood the question.

Source: www.jobsearchonline.bc.ca
THE GODFATHER OF BUSINESS SIMULATION
FOUNDER OF TRI CORPORATION SHARES HIS NUGGETS OF WISDOM

By LLOYD GREEN
editor@leaderonomics.com

D R Thomas E. Conine Jr is synonymous with the financial services industry. In a career spanning 40 years, he has galvanized the development of companies specializing in corporate education, experiential leadership and simulation programmes, and has been peerless in the creation of industry academia focusing on corporate finance and investments.

Appearing on The Leaderonomics Show, Conine discusses his transformation into an industry leader and his passion for executive education and simulations in finance services. He also shares his opinion on the importance of establishing credibility within the business sector and how an experience in finance can get you a seat at the table.

COMBINING ACADEMIA AND BUSINESS
Conine's journey has been one of purpose and commitment, combining a love of education, academia and finance, with a determined business strategy to elevate him to his current guise as president, partner and co-owner of the world's leading business simulation company, TRI Corporation.

After graduating with advanced degrees in finance, business and philosophy from New York University (NYU), including a PhD in Theoretical Finance and Statistics, Conine began his ascendency through the business simulation ranks, combining his roles at Fairfield University in Connecticut with consultancy at General Electric’s Management Development Institute.

"When I was at NYU I wasn’t really sure if I was going to go into an academic kind of career, possibly more consulting. But my time there kind of convinced me that I loved education.”

This passion evolved throughout the 1980s and eventually led to a business venture with simulations expert David Sims, where they began to form the seeds of TRI Corporation.

Combining Conine’s expertise in education and Sims’ knowledge of simulations, they soon became a formidable partnership, and by the mid-90s had built a reputation as one of the best simulations companies in the world.

Since then it has been an upward spiral, providing experiential type learning and business simulations to 14 of Dow’s 30 companies across the globe.

And if that’s not enough to impress you, Conine has all the while maintained his position as professor of finance at the Dolan School of Business at Fairfield University.

He has demonstrated an unrivalled knowledge in the fields of Customer Economics, Risk Management, International Privations and Meeting Commitments in the Financial Framework of Variance Analysis and has co-authored the American Institute of Certified Professional Accountant’s (AICPA) Shareholder Value Creation.

THE KEY TO SUCCESS
Conine says the strategy behind TRI Corporation’s elevation to global powerehouse was never to become the biggest, but to be among the best business simulation companies in the world and to provide top quality services for their customers.

TRI Corporation’s list of clients, which reads as a who’s who of multinational corporations including Boeing, Microsoft, General Electric and Petronas, have garnered an organic growth like no other.

Their success has not only dictated the type of customers TRI Corporation has been able to attract but has established a level of integrity that is priceless. As Conine muses, “Most of our growth is through our network. If you look at all our clients today, and we have roughly 25 clients from around the world. It’s all through the network that we have developed.

“Credibility comes from making sure that whatever we’re doing is aligned absolutely with the client’s needs and their strategy. If you don’t have that alignment it will be a very short relationship.”

Conine believes it is essential to emphasize an expert understanding of finance within the business sphere and for companies to employ people who are not only passionate about what they do, but are passionate about sharing their knowledge with others.

“Today’s world, if you don’t have an understanding of finance and accounting, essentially it’s the language of business, you’re not going to have a seat at the table.

“The average age of our employees is 56 or 57 years old. They are people with significant business experience, and they bring a love to the game I’ve never seen elsewhere.

“When we’re teaching business simulations, we have to have a passion for it, we have to have a love for it and it starts with us as the teachers. If we can’t convey that, we’re not doing our job.”

INSPIRATION AND ADVICE
So what’s the secret behind finding that passion?

Well, for Conine his inspiration started with a US$500 investment on the stock market as a teenager, but now reflecting on his career, the TRI Corporation president says soft skills such as relationships and interpersonal skills are equally as important as numbers and equations.

“Hard skills obviously can get you that first job but then they taper off, whereas the importance on soft skills goes up geometrically because business is all about people dealing with people,” he said.

“My biggest challenge at the start was that I wasn’t a great team player. It soon became very important that one needs to be able to work and build a consensus with a team.

“For any young person, the best advice is to get the most holistic type of education you probably can. It makes for a very well-rounded individual.”

And in terms of business leadership, Conine urges chief executive officers and chief operating officers to do just one thing.

“Why not say ‘thank you’ to people?” he said.

“We need to understand that at the end of the day, business is about people dealing with people. You get to the top and it’s easy to forget that. Hearing a ‘thank you’ is a very positive motivation.”

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
SERIOUS GAMES: FAD OR BREAKTHROUGH?

ARE WE READY TO MAKE THE MOST OF SERIOUS GAMES?

By ADELINE TAY
adeline.tay@leaderonomics.com

The notion of using games in the education setting is attracting the attention of researchers, educators, and corporations alike. As such, the idea of serious games is appealing and everyone is eager to jump on board on what is perceived to be the next wave. In my previous article, "Game-Based Learning: Too Good to be True?" three reasons were presented to highlight how serious games can be used as an effective learning tool.

Having said that, caution is needed in evaluating the effectiveness of specific serious games in the market. Though some individuals or companies may make convincing and extraordinary statements to market their products to the public, the truth of the matter is that there is a lack of reliable research to validate many of the claims made by these parties.

As such, at this point in time, it is wiser to take such claims with a pinch of salt. So, here are four points you should take note of when evaluating the effectiveness of any serious games.

1. SUBSTANCE TRUMPS APPEARANCE

Although serious games are commonly referred to as digital forms of educational games, they are essentially games which are developed with the purpose to teach a particular subject area. Therefore, serious games can be delivered in the form of a board game, card game, video game, or online game. The medium in which a game is presented does not matter as much as the content of the game itself, and what it enables the players to do. Some researchers have pointed out that students’ learning performance might not be as good as expected if serious games are merely another way of presenting the learning materials.

2. NO ONE SUPERIOR FORM

Though serious games are generally classified as a genre of its own, a close examination of the types of serious games that were used in various studies indicated that it can appear in very different forms. To name a few, it could be a puzzle game, simulation or even a role-playing game. To this date, there is minimal research available that compares the effectiveness of different forms of games to teach a particular topic or subject. It is possible that certain forms are better for teaching certain subjects than others. Due to the wide variety of forms that a particular game can take to teach the same topic, it is still too early at this point in time to tell whether certain forms are more compatible than others, and further research is definitely needed to investigate deeper into this area.

3. IMPRESSIVE GRAPHICS ≠ ENHANCED LEARNING

The impact of realism was examined in a meta-analysis and researchers found that schematic serious games (i.e. games with textual or otherwise very simple graphics with no cartoons) were more effective than cartoonlike or realistic games. Therefore from the perspective of learning, there is no argument to invest in photorealistic visual designs because more basic designs such as schematic and cartoonlike designs were found to be equally or more effective in delivering its learning outcome. Keeping this in mind, the results suggest that designers of serious games should direct their focus more on the learning content and less on visual designs.

4. SUPPLEMENT, NOT REPLACEMENT

Last but not least, it is important to bear in mind that it is not possible to use serious games as a sole means of delivering educational material. In an experimental setting, researchers did not provide any lectures prior to allowing students to interact with a game, and expected the participants to learn a particular content solely from the game. However, research studies which were conducted in a naturalistic setting reported that most would use games to supplement what is taught in lectures. Therefore, realistically speaking, serious games are more suitable to be used as a supplementary learning resource, and lectures are still mandatory for the main delivery of content, as it helps to clarify any misrepresentations which appeared in the game.

In another experiment, it was found that participants, who played the same game both on a computer and with traditional materials, produced no differences in their performance levels and reasoning strategies used. Although the use of computers or the Internet possess a huge potential for enhancing the learner’s experience, the results revealed that video games that do not make much use of the features available in a computer is effective, because of the content of the game that the computer allows one to play, rather than the features of the computer itself. Therefore, to improve students’ learning performance, researchers stressed the importance of providing proper learning support materials or instructional strategies in addition to integrating learning materials into computer games.

CAUTION AGAINST LOSING SIGHT OF THE REAL GOAL

Considering the fact that a substantial amount of resources is required to develop one serious game, one should not simply waste resources on game features which do not significantly impact learning.

There is no point investing in poorly designed games as conventional methods would then be a more effective and less costly way of delivering learning materials. Considering the high amount of resources required, it would thus be more worthwhile to invest on quality games that result in actual learning outcomes.

Another point to note is that when a good serious game does come along, it will be a waste if the game is only accessible to elites or selected students. Amid the hype surrounding this topic, let us not forget that the ultimate objective of developing effective serious games is to ensure that all students, regardless of socioeconomic background, will be able to access such games and benefit from them.
THE ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL MOVEMENT

THE CHALLENGE IS NOT TO FIX THE EDUCATION SYSTEM BUT TO CHANGE IT, NOT TO REFORM IT BUT TO TRANSFORM IT.

By JASMINE CHUAH
editor@leaderonomics.com

THIS book by Sir Ken Robinson and Lou Aronica is essentially a toolkit for every person who is interested in changing education. In it, the authors equip readers with an understanding of the current state of education, the optimal state that education should be at, and suggestions on how to move from one state to the other. This toolkit includes heaps of inspiration served up in minute bites, with a few success stories per chapter arguing that change is possible at any level of education, if we want it badly enough. The end of each chapter drives home the point that every single person can be part of the movement of transformative education. No, seriously. All we need to do is get creative about schools, and education in general. We may not be one of those people who can walk into schools and start car-building workshops like Steve Rees, or build miniature towns like Richard Gerver or improve the system but are not in any position of direct influence, these can be your starting points:

1. BE CURIOUS
   Throughout the book, the authors point toward one commonly occurring issue in education: the near-death of curiosity. In nearly all of the examples, students start out as dis-engaged. Educators who successfully ignited the students’ curiosity solved the problem of disengagement, which had been the real cause of poor learning and chronic absenteeism.

2. COMMUNITY
   Robinson argues that change has to come from within, from the very people who live and work in the vicinity of schools. He points out that communities can really affect schools. “Communities must build their schools and neighbourhoods together. Only by establishing true community learning places can cities restore to high schools a sense of place, and give students a sense that they have an important contribution to make in their communities.”
   In his success stories, people from different segments of the hierarchy are not afraid to get involved or to make a move to involve others in education. Principals describe changing the subcultures of the school to fit the interests of the students. Parents describe partnering with the school in running workshops or in changing it for the better. Outsiders mentor the students by having lunch with them and bringing them to their workplace for a day.

3. CULTURE
   Everyone who has been through the education system will definitely remember one thing: exams are important. Robinson quotes fifth-grade teacher Khonda Matthews, “State tests stop all the thinking, discussing and community building. Once we get into test prep, there’s no real conversation.”
   He goes on to say that, while exams as a means of standardisation can be a good thing, the problem with it being used in education is that people are not standard, and so not all areas of education can be standardised. Even so, standardised testing has become an obsession in itself. We are facing the same issue in Malaysia.
   We need to change the culture of exams. Although it is difficult to change the way students are evaluated or the way subjects are taught, we can still try to re-orient the way our youths think and encourage them to break out of the rote-learning model that our system currently adopts. With so many avenues for self-directed learning available, students can and are looking elsewhere to develop their minds.

YOUR MOVE
   Education is the responsibility of everyone, because it is something each of us has an opportunity to make an impact in, however small.
   Robinson ends with a call to action for change and for collaboration for the good of education. He writes that the world is changing, and we must change with it, particularly in the way we teach our children. And in order to teach well, we have to make our schools creative, to keep planning and dreaming.
PARENTS AS CONSISTENT ROLE MODELS

Your child is learning how to value other people and institutions by watching your example. Your child also takes cues on self-worth from you. Respect yourself and your child will follow your lead.

SIMPLE BUT GOOD
If you are feeling a sense of anxiety, discomfort or dread from reading the above list, do not fear: There is no such thing as a perfect parent or an ideal family. Parents will make mistakes and your children will watch you make those mistakes.

But what is crucial for learning is how you handle the situation when you do make mistakes. Instead of covering up that you have made mistakes, you have an ideal opportunity to show your child how to effectively use problem-solving skills, learn from mistakes, and how to communicate effectively.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS
So parents, let’s start now. The sooner, the better. The more consistent, the better. As they grow up, children will learn by example and they’ll have your example to follow in years to come.

Jean has a background in marriage and family therapy and has worked with a variety of people. She believes that everyone has their strengths and can be empowered to lead a life filled with positivity, strength and true happiness. If you would like to find out how to better leverage your strengths and manage your weaknesses in your personal or professional life, please email her at jean.selvam@leaderonomics.com

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- DIODE Youth Leadership Camp – Nov 30-Dec 5, Dec 14-19
- DIODE School Leavers Camp – Dec 7-12

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