HOW FLAT CAN YOU GO?
THE NEW ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE
PAGES 6-7

Holacracy or holacrazy?
Revolutionising traditional hierarchy
Pg 03

LOYALTY REDEFINED
Breaking boundaries in the workplace
Pg 09

IMPORTANCE OF A SUPPORTING ROLE
Unconventional lessons from Maleficent
Pg 11

NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS
A time for family and renewed focus
Pg 12
DO YOU LIKE IT FLAT?

Imagining an organisation being run with minimal hierarchy, let alone bureaucracy, I’m not referring to start-ups with two co-founders running the entire show, mind you. These are multitudes of outfits that have entire teams working on simultaneous projects, minus the traditional top-down approach – where the manager barns the orders, and the team of subordinates executes the directive. We have come a long way from traditional management methods of toeing the line and submitting to the instructions of our “pay masters”. Disruptors of different industries are emerging everywhere, and they will not rest until a revolution of sorts becomes a reality.

Holacracy, a word that was so foreign to me when I first heard it; it sounded like something that came from an intergalactic dimension – pardon my ignorance for a moment. After doing a little search on Google, it is being defined as a new way of running an organisation that strips power off the management hierarchy and allocates it across clear roles. It is then rolled out independently, without a boss who’s consumed with micromanaging. Radical and risky – those are the two words that come to mind while reading how holacracy is being defined. One of the most prominent advocate of this structure is Zappos (today a wholly-owned subsidiary of Amazon) – they make more than two billion US dollars annually. That’s a pretty cool amount to be making for an organisation that doesn’t have a management hierarchy and allocates it across clear roles. It is after his own frustrations over the bureaucracy in traditional organisations that steered people from using their natural gifts and talents.

If you are like me, most of us would be thinking that these organisations would be running themselves to the ground, with chaos and incompetence being the by-product. We can’t be further from the truth. A key difference with holacracy is that roles are defined not around people, but the project or work that is being delivered. Another area would be authority – teams and individuals are empowered, and decisions decentralised. Rules established are also standardised, and applied to all, including the chief executive officer. Talk about being transparent and leading by example. Read on to find out what being flat means.

In Hard Talk, Sanjeev Naravati, the longest-serving CEO of Citibank Malaysia brought up the question: “Can everything in a complex business be reduced to metrics?” It was a challenging and thought-provoking read, as he asked a number of pertinent questions that many organisations are consumed with. Flip through the pages to find out what he has to say about the subject matter.

Till then, have a wonderful weekend ahead.

Carpe diem.
IAN LEE
Editor
Leaderonomics.com

HOla, holacracy!

WHAT
Holacracy is a comprehensive management practice for structuring, governing and running an organisation. It replaces today’s top-down, predict-and-control paradigm with a new way of achieving control by distributing power. Holacracy defines roles not by the conventional hierarchy and titles, but by rules. It aims to create organisations that are fast and agile, i.e. ones that succeed by pursuing their purpose, not following a dated and superficial plan.

Holacracy is not the same as a flat organisation.

WHO
Brian Robertson, a former computer programmer, invented holacracy. He created holacracy in 2007 because he had a burning sense that there has to be a better way to work together. This is after his own frustrations over the bureaucracy in traditional organisations that steered people from using their natural gifts and talents.

WHERE
Champions and advocates of holacracy include Tony Hsieh, chief executive officer (CEO) of Zappos, Evan Williams, co-founder of Blogger, Twitter, and Medium; and David Allen of the David Allen Company.

WHY
Holacracy is specifically designed for swift and sustainable scaling, as the organisation’s structure of circles expands and divides based on the work that needs to get done. It establishes a framework for integrated decision-making, without falling into the trap of hierarchical consensus building. Leadership and management is distributed, resulting in more engaged and autonomous team members.

HOW

In traditional companies

- Each person has exactly one job.
- Job descriptions are imprecise, rarely updated, and often irrelevant.
- Managers loosely delegate authority. Ultimately, their decision always overtrump.
- The organisational structure is rarely revisited, mandated from the top.
- Implicit rules slow down change and favour people “in the know.”

In holacracy

- Roles are defined around the work, not people, and are updated regularly. People fit several roles.
- Authority is truly distributed to teams and roles. Decisions are made locally.
- The organisational structure is regularly updated via small iterations. Every team self-organises.
- Everyone is bound by the same rules, CEO included. Roles are visible to all.

COMMON TERMS USED IN HOLACRACY
- Circle: People work within circles that represent different aspects of a company’s work.
- Role: A job with a specific mandate within a circle. The person who empowers a given role has autonomy over that domain.
- Governance: A regimented meeting where the structure of the organisation (circles and roles) is decided. These can happen whenever an organisation thinks a change is necessary.
- Tactical meeting: A replacement for weekly team meetings, during which circle members’ “process tensions” until they’re resolved.
- Tension: The problem someone has with the work. It’s officially defined as “dissonance between what is (current reality) and what could be (the purpose).”
- Tension processing: Each person talks out his problem with the group until he who raised the tension is satisfied with a next step.

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

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

For more great interviews, look us up by typing “Leaderonomics Media” on your web browser.

Sit back and enjoy what we have in store for you!

TUNE IN

Want practical tips to grow yourself as a leader?

WE'RE ON RAISE YOUR GAME

BFM89.9

every Monday from 5.30am to 8.30am

JOIN US!
Holacracy And Zappos

Method or Madness?

By MORAG BARRETT
editor@leaderonomics.com

Zappos announced in 2014 that the organisation is changing – it will be a holacracy. If you’re like me, your first reaction may have been ‘huh? What?’

My mind immediately went to the time when a certain popstar changed his name to a squiggle and everyone had to resort to introducing him as “the artist formerly known as Prince”. So rather than face that, I went to Wikipedia to find the following definition. Holacracy is a social technology of self-organised teams rather than being vested at the top of a hierarchy.

Say what?

Essentially, a holacracy is a company without titles, or managers, that has self-governing teams which determine what they need to do, and how this will be done. It is a company that is organised around the work that needs to be done, not around the people who do it. Sounds good, in theory.

So why have Zappos made this move? According to the interviews I read, the move to a holacracy is designed to prevent bureaucracy from getting in the way of Zappos’ ongoing growth. As part of Amazon since 2009, they are looking to avoid the risk of the non-glamorous work being overlooked. Otherwise you run the risk of the “I need to call customer service – who is the shoe designer?” syndrome. Handoffs will become inefficient and new expectations. Agreement about who is in the room.

At the risk of oversimplifying the situation, let’s look at elements which are consistently cited as evidence of a holacracy.

1. No titles
   It sounds so easy – abolish job titles and “ta-da” you’re a holacracy. It’s not that simple. You have to change mindsets and behaviours while clarifying new expectations. Agreement about who is doing what must be crystal clear. Why? Otherwise you run the risk of the non-glamorous work being overlooked. Handoffs will become inefficient and business decisions will stall.

2. No managers
   Instead of having managers and their direct reports, Zappos will be made up of 400 “circles”, teams of people who work together. One of the huge benefits I see from this approach is organic growth of a coaching culture.

In a holacracy, coaching, feedback and learning become part of everyone’s job. This fosters a culture of teamwork and continuous improvement – as both a necessity and a new reality.

3. Manager-less doesn’t mean leader-less
   While the goal of holacracy is empowerment and personal accountability, it doesn’t mean anarchy. There will still be leaders who inform and set direction. Each circle creates and adheres to rules of engagement, where quality of work is monitored.

In a holacracy, the group determines how to distribute tasks and how to hold each other accountable. As a result, micromanagement is removed and senior leaders are no longer “in-the-weeds” – unless they choose to be.

Who does this?

Job titles are not just for internal audiences. Customers are accustomed to interact with your company based on titles. “I need to call customer service – who do I call if there are no titles?”

“I’m a shoe designer – who is the shoe buyer?”

In creating a holacracy, you also need to communicate with your external customers and partners. Overlook this critical element and you’ll alienate the very people you are trying to serve. Help customers understand accountability and leadership have not changed.

As I started to research and read about holacracy, I admit my initial approach was, “This is madness.” I know plenty of organisations that struggle to operate with bad management. The idea of no management left me a little concerned. However, while there may not be many examples of holacracies in practice, they do exist. And then it dawned on me.

My company is a holacracy. My team and I are all capable of fulfilling any role in the business, whether it’s meeting with a client, designing a new leadership programme, or facilitating an executive retreat. And we all do it without titles and without fuss.

We meet regularly to discuss what is happening within our business and we decide how the work gets done. We leverage technology so that at any moment, we know what is happening with our clients. This makes us flexible and scalable. It is one of the many things our clients say they value in our approach to creating a partnership that ensures their success. It works. It certainly feels like “method” and not “madness” to us.

Pondering thoughts

The question remains, can a company the size of Zappos become a holacracy? Only time will tell. All I know is this, that if anyone can make this work, then Hsieh and the team at Zappos can.

This fosters a culture of teamwork and continuous improvement – as both a necessity and a new reality.
We have an end-to-end graduate recruitment process so you can attract, evaluate and select the best talent available, without the hassle of multiple vendors. Here’s how we do it.

Contact Kathleen at kathleen.tan@leaderonomics.com to schedule a free consultation.
4. Today’s manager is the key to ensuring that your culture permeates throughout the entire business

This includes how to develop managers to clearly communicate, how to promote accountability and how to lead. And again, is this the manager’s problem or is it a problem in how executives develop them?

Consider that many managers were promoted from front line positions due to their work ethics and technical competence. These attributes don’t necessarily prepare someone to manage people in today’s business environment.

The hiring of managers via promotion from within will work best if there is an accompanying plan to develop the high potential employee into an effective “manager of people” first and foremost. Somehow, many of us have bought into the contrast between a “leader” and a “manager”. In reality, our best managers are leaders. Are we making the appropriate effort to groom our managers into leaders?

4. Today’s manager is the key to ensuring that your culture permeates throughout the entire business

A healthy culture is the convergence of the right people and process. It is about the right behaviours, philosophies and attitudes. Our cultures must be leader-driven and employee-owned.

Today’s manager ensures that all employees are aligned with the company’s values, strategy and mission. Today’s manager looks beyond technical skills and KPIs (key performance indicators) to ensure that unwanted behaviours are eliminated from the company (ie lack of empowerment, status quo thinking, and micromanaging).

Today’s manager kills waste and bureaucracy and establishes trust at the foundation of all relationships. Recognise that appropriately trained and aligned managers are vital to the execution of the company’s mission and to the development of employees.

Whether your business model is traditional or you adopt a new approach, a strong internal culture based on values, accountability and teamwork should always come first.

Concluding thoughts

Eliminating managers may sound appealing, but I say, don’t buy it. Some level of management structure is essential to our company’s growth and execution of its mission.

The manager is an asset; he/she is not the problem. Be sure that you have the right people in management roles. Attack waste, bureaucracy, siloed thinking and outdated processes. Promote creativity and empowerment, and redefine the role of the manager to meet these needs.

By Brian Fielkow

Training@leaderonomics.com

It’s Time to Quit Bashing the Manager

O often we blame the manager when issues arise in the workplace. And recently, companies such as Zappos are deciding to do away with the manager position altogether and are turning to a concept called “holacracy”.

According to holacracy.org, this structure “removes power from a management hierarchy and distributes it across clear roles, which can then be executed autonomously, without a micro-managing boss.”

Since Zappos announced that its organisational structure would no longer contain job titles and put everyone in charge of their own work, about 14% of Zappos’ employees (about 200 people) have accepted severance rather than participate in the company’s new organisational structure.

Where is the middle ground, and what are we missing when it comes to the important role of the manager?

As chief executive officers, we must count the manager among our most valuable resources. In my own experiences, an empowered and enthusiastic management team allows me to be more effective in the performance of our responsibilities. The manager is our conduit to executing our strategic and operating goals.

Unfortunately, and unfairly, the manager takes the blame for the shortcomings of how many companies are structured.

While we must attack wasteful structures, processes and positions, the role of the manager should not be eliminated. Instead, the role of the manager must be retooled for today’s organisation.

Consider the following:

1. Managers are not the problem

The traditional role of the manager is the problem. Our own inefficiencies and bureaucracies are the problem.

If we put the manager in an organisation that is designed (intentionally or not) to maintain the status quo, kill creativity and fear risk-taking, why are we surprised when the manager exhibits this behaviour?

The “micromanager” is often a symptom of an organisation that is perfectly designed to generate this result by not promoting a culture of empowerment and by not giving the manager the tools and training to develop his or her team.

Blaming the manager ignores the real issue which is that many businesses operate using antiquated “command and control” philosophies.

2. Many business fail to articulate organisational clarity, regardless of structure

Managers often are vested with responsibility but lack proper authority or tools to execute on the company’s strategic objectives. At this point, managers justifiably are frustrated, and that frustration spills over to the front lines.

Once again, the problem is not with the manager per se, it’s with a company’s failure to communicate structures, values and accountability and appropriately empower its managers.

3. Some companies offer little to no training in how to develop managers

This includes how to develop managers to clearly communicate, how to promote accountability and how to lead. And again, is this the manager’s problem or is it a problem in how executives develop them?

Consider that many managers were promoted from front line positions due to their work ethics and technical competence. These attributes don’t necessarily prepare someone to manage people in today’s business environment.

The manager is an asset, an asset we must count the manager among our most valuable resources. In my own experiences, an empowered and enthusiastic management team allows me to be more effective in the performance of our responsibilities. The manager is our conduit to executing our strategic and operating goals.

Unfortunately, and unfairly, the manager takes the blame for the shortcomings of how many companies are structured.

While we must attack wasteful structures, processes and positions, the role of the manager should not be eliminated. Instead, the role of the manager must be retooled for today’s organisation.

Consider the following:

1. Managers are not the problem

The traditional role of the manager is the problem. Our own inefficiencies and bureaucracies are the problem.

If we put the manager in an organisation that is designed (intentionally or not) to maintain the status quo, kill creativity and fear risk-taking, why are we surprised when the manager exhibits this behaviour?

The “micromanager” is often a symptom of an organisation that is perfectly designed to generate this result by not promoting a culture of empowerment and by not giving the manager the tools and training to develop his or her team.

Blaming the manager ignores the real issue which is that many businesses operate using antiquated “command and control” philosophies.

2. Many business fail to articulate organisational clarity, regardless of structure

Managers often are vested with responsibility but lack proper authority or tools to execute on the company’s strategic objectives. At this point, managers justifiably are frustrated, and that frustration spills over to the front lines.

Once again, the problem is not with the manager per se, it’s with a company’s failure to communicate structures, values and accountability and appropriately empower its managers.

3. Some companies offer little to no training in how to develop managers

This includes how to develop managers to clearly communicate, how to promote accountability and how to lead. And again, is this the manager’s problem or is it a problem in how executives develop them?

Consider that many managers were promoted from front line positions due to their work ethics and technical competence. These attributes don’t necessarily prepare someone to manage people in today’s business environment.
**THE GIFT AND THE GIVEN**

**EXPLORING THE TERRAIN OF FLAT ORGANISATIONS**

**HARD TALK**

By EVELYN TEE

evelyn@leaderonomics.com

---

**THE GIFT AND THE GIVEN**

The gift and the given. Two seemingly opposed concepts, yet they are deeply interrelated. The gift is something we give without expectation of anything in return, while the given is something we receive, often without actively seeking it. In the context of organisations, these two concepts play a significant role in shaping the environment. Let's explore how the gift and the given are linked in the terrain of flat organisations.

---

**THE GIFT**

In flat organisations, the gift is evident through the empowerment of employees. It is the recognition of the unique talents and contributions of each individual, allowing them to contribute in ways that align with their strengths. The gift is about fostering a culture of authenticity, where people feel safe to express themselves and take risks. This is reflected in the way leadership communicates and the level of trust and transparency within the organisation. When leaders give the gift of visibility, recognition, and support, employees are more likely to feel valued and to give their best.

---

**THE GIVEN**

On the other hand, the given is about the conditions that make it possible for the gift to be offered. In a flat organisation, the given includes a culture that promotes collaboration, transparency, and open communication. It is a space where everyone feels heard and valued, regardless of their position or role. The given is the foundation upon which the gift can thrive, allowing individuals to flourish and contribute to the organisation's success.

---

**THE GIFT AND THE GIVEN COMBINED**

The gift and the given work together to create a dynamic and vibrant environment. When leaders consistently offer the gift of empowerment and recognition, they are creating a space where employees feel supported and encouraged. This, in turn, generates a sense of belonging and loyalty, which is the given. The combination of these two concepts leads to a positive cycle where the gift begets more gifts and the given enhances the given.

---

**The Gift and the Given in Flat Organisations**

In conclusion, the gift and the given are not just theoretical concepts; they are fundamental principles that guide the design and operation of flat organisations. By embracing the gift and the given, organisations can create a culture where everyone feels valued, heard, and supported. This, in turn, leads to increased productivity, innovation, and overall success. So, let us continue to explore how we can nurture the gift and the given in our organisations, creating spaces where everyone feels encouraged to give their best and where the given is always present to support the gift.

---

**Notes**

1. The gift is about giving without expectation of anything in return.
2. The given refers to the conditions that make the gift possible.
3. Flat organisations encourage a culture of empowerment and recognition.

---

**References**


---

**Image Credits**


---

**Further Reading**

[1]领导原则：来自领导者的礼物与给予。领英，2023年1月23日。
THE FATAL ATTRACTION OF MEASURING EVERYTHING

By SANCHEV MANAVATI
editor@leaderonomics.com

I T’S been said that not everything we know is useful and not everything that counts can be counted. With the exponential growth of computing and the fascination with big data, the battle cry of many chief executive officers (CEOs) is to measure everything. You often hear the mantra “you are what you measure”.

Really? Can everything that is important in a complex business be reduced to metrics?

Daily dashboards. End of day reports. Weekly review meetings. Monthly business reviews. Do any of these sound familiar? Finance functions and information technology departments are being challenged to provide more and more real time data and analytics. There is a mad scramble to stay on “top of it”. In some very limited parts of a business, such detail and frequency may be necessary.

In most other cases, employees are being terrorised by senior management who are afraid that they may miss something. Detailed decks are dutifully produced and managers are expected to explain the data in great detail. But is this whole process useful?

MEASURING INFORMATION TOO FREQUENTLY CAN BE HAZARDOUS

Managers seek daily, weekly and monthly reports. For example, to measure sales and sales productivity or trading positions, such frequency can be useful. But even here there is a risk of not seeing trends.

And none of this ever answers the question of why a particular outcome has occurred. It is in the why the insights reside.

There is a further issue of determining the right balance between measuring outcomes and the drivers or perceived drivers of those outcomes.

Most analytics look at the rear-view mirror and even that perspective may not be correct. Business, however, needs to be lived forward.

The attempt to measure everything reflects a notion that running a business is a science and that with the right data and analysis, you can answer why something happened and what will happen.

Unfortunately, reality is different. The bottom line is that managing a business is as much an art as it is a science.

THE NOISE OF AVAILABLE INFORMATION IS DEAFENING

Information is often mistaken for insight. Companies generate mountains of analysis in the hope and often mistaken belief that “the data will talk”. It is hoped that by crunching data a hundred different ways, some insight will emerge. This rarely happens.

Furthermore, what you don’t see is more important than what is visible. Human resources departments often produce mountains of data regarding people who leave such as length of service and which area is prone to turnover. What is often missing is why people stay, which is much more important and insightful.

It’s worth keeping in mind that even the most exquisite painting when viewed up close blurs. Perspective and distance are critical. The optimal distance will vary but there is no question that when things are too close you miss the contours, you miss the sharpness.

It is the same with data and metrics. When you get too much, you lose perspective. You may not know which makes it all the more dangerous. Trends become hard to spot. At different levels of management, different levels of information and analysis is needed.

When CEOs and boards get into too much detail under the false pretence of getting their hands dirty, what they are really doing is losing perspective and limiting their ability to distinguish between signals and noise.

FALLACY: MEASURING EVERY POSSIBLE ASPECT OF A BUSINESS INCREASES EFFICIENCY

Making every part of a car efficient does not necessarily increase the efficiency of the car because performance depends on how the car is constructed and how the parts are put together to work together.

A company’s performance is not dependent upon how good each employee is or how good each department is, but more importantly how individuals and groups work together.

What really matters in a company is how decisions are made, how people collaborate and how risks and opportunities are calibrated amongst other things. Often this is called culture. Some of the most important things that drive success cannot be measured.

THE PRICE OF TRADING DEPTH FOR BREATHE

Trading depth for breadth narrows the vision and creates the false impression of getting to the root of an issue.

Most data analytics cannot measure the interaction between the different parts of an organisation where the true competitive differentiation lies.

A bank, for example, can measure how quickly complaints are handled. But what really matters is what was learnt about the underlying process that led to the complaint, and how a different part of the bank incorporated that learning. This latter more important aspect is much harder to measure.

HYPOTHESIS TESTING IS OFTEN A BETTER WAY TO APPROACH DATA

Insightful and effective managers who understand the business start with a series of hypotheses. The quality of the hypothesis depends upon the experience of the managers and the diversity of the team.

They seek data to either prove or disprove a hypothesis, rather than madly churning out data and analysis. This is a much more effective way to mine data and work with data. In practice, it is rarely done.

More importantly, the focus should be on extracting actionable insights which requires adequate time and emphasis. This too is rarely done.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

CEOs and boards must guard against the delusion that stacks of data and measurements are a substitute for intelligence, judgment and insights. Getting lost in the crowd of data and missing vital signals can be fatal.

Too much information, not enough insight; too frequent information, not enough reflection, is not good. Sometimes less is indeed more.
With four generations existing at the workplace today – traditionalist, baby boomer and millennial (Generation-X and Generation-Y) – along with the rapidly evolving business environment, the need for us to continually change and adapt to address the various needs of each individual have never been so demanding.

We spend a major part of our lives at the workplace, so it’s very important for us to look at the motivation factors and values that drive our work and the organisation we serve.

Loyalty to a company is highly esteemed and often deemed as a valuable trait whereby an employee with a long tenure is seen as a valuable asset to the organisation.

1. RETHINKING WORKPLACE LOYALTY

Unfortunately, loyalty is now suffering a prevalent decline in the workplace. Our current social climate indicates the lesser likelihood for co-dependence, or to be tied to a particular place or person – a dominant and ongoing trend within the millennial generation.

These days, employee loyalty has been reconceptualised as not just a commitment to a particular company or organisation but a stronger association of their career or allegiance towards a relationship. Employee loyalty is an area of concern for organisations and employers across the board as it is associated with productivity, employee retention, and satisfaction.

The lack of it can trigger disruption such as absenteeism, attrition and high exit cost.

2. WATCHING OVER ME

In the last 40 years, stability and patrimony has driven many organisations – it was understood that the company would look after you and give you a career.

Hence, loyalty is expected in return. It is not surprising to find employees who have worked in the same company for decades.

However, over time the definition and value of loyalty has been redefined. Serving the same company for too long is no longer viewed in a positive light.

One of the reasons for the shift in worldview is due to the perception that long tenures deny an individual of growth and exposure to different environments.

Another reason is caused by the impression that long attachments promote habits that are hard to break.

3. SETTING REAL EXPECTATIONS FOR EVERYONE

Millennials are often accused of not understanding the value of loyalty. On the flip side, they actually adapt well to change, thriving in dynamic environments that provide them with a multitude of challenges and opportunities.

With the various demands of managing diversity and differing needs in the workplace, how do we then motivate this generation of individuals to have “loyalty” or organisational commitment?

Getting everyone working towards a common goal is one way. Shared values are able to keep people glued together. Thus, with our multifaceted diversity in the workplace, it has become imperative for leaders to manage not only generational differences but the many types of individual differences in the workplace.

4. TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS FOR EMPLOYEE LOYALTY AND ENGAGEMENT

There needs to be a fundamental shift as to how we view workplace relationships. People are more attracted towards individuals – such as caring employers – and not companies.

Instead of focusing on achieving loyalty as an end goal in the workplace, it can be viewed as a result of a caring relationship where loyalty is an outflow and natural expression of mutual reciprocity. More importantly, it is crucial to view loyalty beyond just being an obligatory compliance of a contractual obligation but a reflection of a strong interpersonal relationship.

An organisation that takes on a care-based approach and mirror personal relationships would reflect a better relationship model in running organisations or teams.

5. TRUST WITHIN THE ORGANISATION

The heavy emphasis on workplace commitment and loyalty is noteworthy, as a research done by Brown et. al. (2011) shows that these two factors have an effect on workplace performance and productivity.

Furthermore, three factors termed as workplace spirituality dimensions – meaningful work, sense of community and alignment with organisational values – are positively correlated to employee commitment.

The point of contention with regards to loyalty can be addressed as to what it means to the individual. We do have to consider that loyalty is not just a moral virtue nor a duty, but the context in how commitment is represented.

According to Oxley and Wittkower (2012), the sense of loyalty employees feel towards their companies can take in various forms and degrees: the pursuit of personal interest, an obligation, an allegiance, a self-sacrificial act or just merely a feeling.

IN CONCLUSION

In my opinion, the moral value of loyalty is not declining but rather has taken on a different form in how it is defined and played out in the society. Instead of sticking to someone or something for the sake of obligation, commitment or compliance of expectation, or attaching oneself to an abstract construct of a company or organisation, it would be more meaningful to build relationships based on trust.

Such a relationship would include one who would give their best and is fully engaged at their workplace during their tenure in their company. Consider this quote by Korkki (2011), “Loyalty is about the future — trust is about the present.”

Loyalty is a result of trust. So let us live in the moment and focus on building a company and organisational culture rooted in trust rather than just for the sake of loyalty.

Amanda is a strong believer in interdepartmental/cross-collaboration initiatives as she has personally witnessed the immense benefits they bring to both individuals and the organisation from her experience as a talent accelerator manager with the Leaderonomics Talent Acceleration Programme. To connect with her, email amanda.chua@leaderonomics.com.
DON’T use the “enjoy the process” mantra to justify slugging along even more slowly and watching your goals die. It’s a huge limiting belief to assume that going faster means you’re doing something wrong and creating too much stress.

Making goals happen faster is often a LOT more fun. Fast tempo is HOW you enjoy the process. And some goals cannot be achieved slowly at all, so in some cases faster means success while slower means failure.

If going faster makes the process of achieving your goals less enjoyable for you, you’ve probably chosen the wrong goals to begin with. If you don’t want them sooner, you probably don’t want them.

JOURNEY TO SETTING FAST-PACED GOALS

On my first attempt at college, I tried going at the normal student pacing towards graduation. I found my classes boring and uninspiring. The goal of grading in four years seemed distant and too much of my control. The whole experience was pretty depressing, despite the fact that I was attending the #1 school in the nation for my major at the time. I did my best to enjoy the process by having more fun outside of class — getting drunk twice a week, shoplifting like crazy, and playing a lot of poker. That helped — I certainly enjoyed the process more, but it didn’t help me on my path towards graduation. After three semesters, I was expelled, and rightly so. This time I tweaked the goal to make it more fun and inspiring — to start over as a freshman and earn my four-year computer science degree in one and a half years. All I really needed was to tweak the speed. That brought many other inspiring elements to the table — the full engagement of my mind, motivation, focus, curiosity, different ways of thinking about education, a sense of control over the process, higher self-esteem, access to deeper resourcefulness, a powerful vision of myself as being more productive than ever, and so on. This was the inspired path. The energy I felt, upon considering a serious speed increase, was a clear sign that I was onto something.

It also worked. Speed made the goal fun and meaningful. It brought interesting challenges. I revealed in the time management aspect. Finally, I had a goal that felt worthy of me, not the mind-numbing snail’s pace of my first attempt at college education. After all, if 15 semester units equate to 15 hours per week of classroom work (the average for a full-time student), then where is all the extra time going? A serious full-time student can invest a lot more than 15 hours a week in classes. Homework alone isn’t enough to fill in all the other hours of a week.

Instead of making the goal more terrifying and stressful, the faster pacing made the goal so much more fun. I loved the experience!

FASTER PACE = A FUN CHALLENGE

What I love about speed is that it pushes me not just to achieve the goal but also to become a better person along the way. In order to achieve a goal faster, I have to change myself. I have to release more limiting beliefs. I have to become more organised. I have to focus better. I have to let go of more fluff. I have to cultivate new relationships with like-minded achievers. I have to get better at avoiding distractions.

Since I love personal growth, goals that challenge me in this way are so much more fun than goals that don’t.

The speed aspect is what helps me enjoy the process. Without sufficient speed, the enjoyment just isn’t there. Imagine playing your favourite game at 1/10th the speed. Does that help you enjoy the game more or less? For some, maybe it does help. Chess can be enjoyable at a very slow pacing, I’m not suggesting that all goals need to be sped up. Just don’t rule out speed as being negatively stressful. Not all stress is bad. A fast tempo can create a lot of eustress — positive, beneficial stress. It can also mean the difference between achieving a goal and failing to achieve it. Going so slowly that you fail to achieve your desired outcome usually isn’t much fun. You can always justify such failure in retrospect with a “well, at least I learned something” or “I still enjoyed the process” mindset, and that can help, but wouldn’t it have been even better to gain the lessons AND to achieve the goal as well?

HOW MUCH FASTER IS BETTER?

I’m not taking incremental speed increases in most cases. I’m suggesting that you consider a twofold increase in speed at least. Even think about a tenfold increase. Look at one of your goals and ask yourself, “How could I achieve this goal 2 times, 5 times, or even ten times faster?” I love the tenfold question because it really gets me thinking in new directions.

Going fast is one of the things I love about writing. It’s why I’ve written so much. If I wrote as slowly as many other writers do, I’d be underground with a bullet in my decaying skull by now. Going too slowly is a creativity killer for me. I have to write fast to enjoy the process.

These days I can write a 2500-word article in about two hours flat. That includes the time from when I get the initial idea to when it’s fully written, edited, and published on my website. Many writers I’ve talked to consider that very fast. I consider it fun.

This morning I got up at 5am. I got an idea for a new article at 5.20am. And now this 1,100-word article is published a little after 6am — less than 45 minutes from idea to publica-
tion. That pacing is fun. I enjoyed those 40 odd minutes. I could have taken all morning to write this piece, but why go so slow? Fast is fun!

At a higher speed, I’ll make more mistakes. I may not be as elegant or polished, but so what? I can be blunt instead. I’ll get the ideas shared and moving. Some people will benefit from them. That’s what matters. Keep the energy moving and flowing at a pacing that feels exciting. Go too slow, and the ideas shrivel and die.

Today I decided to take on the chal-

lenging of writing for about 12 hours straight — fast — just to see how much content I can create and how quickly I can create it. I intend to keep writing throughout the day with only brief breaks for meals and mental rest as needed. I’ll publish the articles produced over some weeks, not all at once. A challenge like this is a way for me to enjoy the process of writing even more.

It should be noted that going faster doesn’t equate to working crazy, long hours. It means thinking differently about your work, focusing on yourself, and having MORE FUN.

Would you enjoy the process of achieving your goals even more if you increased your pacing twofold, threefold or tenfold? Pick a goal and ask yourself, how can I increase my speed by a tenfold?

See what fresh ideas bubble up from your subconscious. See if you feel any added energy or excitement from the speed. Then go!
THE LITTLE BLACK RAVEN WITH A BIG PURE HEART

By LIM LAY HSUAN
layhsuan.lim@leaderonomics.com

WHICH one stands out more – the book or the bookshelf? The response, I would think, is quite obvious; a book is where you find great stories and lively snapshots or illustrations. (Unless you’re an interior designer who’s probably thinking on how to beautify or repurpose your bookshelf!)

I initially wanted to write about lessons of love and forgiveness learnt from Disney’s well-crafted story of Maleficent, the antagonist we’ve always associated with Sleeping Beauty. Alas, whilst halfway through writing, I found too many articles written about the main character. And if I had continued, it would seem like I was just regurgitating what’s already out there.

Right. So, where am I getting at? I finally thought, “Why not write about Diaval, the black raven?”

So, here are four priceless traits we can depend on: Agility and dependability, sensibility and counsel, faithfulness and loyalty.

1 AGILITY AND DEPENDABILITY

Diaval: And in return for saving my life, I am your servant. Whatever you need.

Maleficent: Wings. I need you to be my wings.

Come to think of it, Diaval isn’t just Maleficent’s “wings”. He is also her eyes and ears on all events that are taking place in King Stefan’s castle. He becomes Maleficent’s sidekick by gathering the human soldiers to her in the form of a wolf. He hastens her journey to the king’s palace in the form of a horse.

He also fights a good fight against the king’s men when he becomes a dragon. Depending on Maleficent’s whim and fancy, Diaval takes on various roles, albeit grudgingly sometimes, but always accomplishing what he needed to do. You know you have such people in your team when you can trust them to complete what they’ve been assigned to do without having to constantly micromanage and monitor their work.

Have you identified such people in your team? What have you done to appreciate them?

2 SENSIBILITY AND COUNSEL

Diaval: I need you, Diaval. I can’t do this without you, Diaval. (Uttered in sarcasm while following Maleficent to King Stefan’s castle even after she gives him an option to leave her to confront the king on her own.)

Diaval’s loyalty towards Maleficent is unquestionable. Even though he occasionally complains about his form, I believe he is always grateful to Maleficent for saving him from the clutches of human entrapment. He knows fully well that the both of them might not come out of King Stefan’s castle alive. But he honours his pledge of servitude to Maleficent, and his even willing to die protecting her. Are you able to identify some of your greatest supporters? Have you acknowledged their work? Or is there recognition overdue?

3 FAITHFULNESS AND LOYALTY

Maleficent: True love’s kiss? Have you not worked it out yet? I cursed her that way because there is no such thing.

Diaval: Well, that might be how you feel, but what about Aurora? That boy could be her only chance. It’s her fate, anyway.

Love for Aurora is evident throughout the movie.

From the moment he breaks the news to Maleficent that there had been a child by King Stefan and the Queen, he appears concerned about what Maleficent would do to the child. In Aurora’s early years, Diaval is always looking out for her, like a guardian angel. He even goes above and beyond his official “job scope” by caring for the needs of her and Aurora.

We see that Diaval, in his bird form, brings baby Aurora a flower with water for her to drink before he starts rocking her crib to put her at ease.

As Aurora becomes older, the handsome black raven often plays with the princess. Take a step back and reflect on the people who have shown you such generosity without expecting anything in return.

Who are these people in your life? How do you intend to reciprocate their kindness and love?

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In personal or professional relationships, “Diavals” are a rare gem. You can always count on them in good or bad times for encouragement, help, wisdom and strength.

May we always be grateful for the “bookshelves” that have supported us in our journey to become a person who is rich in love and big at heart.
A year has gone by and we are now already a few weeks into 2016! We can certainly feel that everyone is back to the daily grind after the long holiday, judging by the sales of school-related items, the hustle and bustle of early morning traffic and of course, the stressed expressions of parents everywhere. It certainly feels like time is flying by and although it’s still the same 24/7 routine, somehow, with packed schedules and electronic devices around us, each day seems to end as quickly as it started. Behold! Before we know it, it’s already the end of January 2016!

Reflecting Forward
In these early days of 2016, nearly everyone speaks about resolutions for the year. Thanks to social media, there are even tips on choosing practical New Year resolutions and ways to achieve them. Naturally, I got sucked into this idea of setting resolutions for 2016, with hopes that it will be even better than my awesome 2015.

While I was thinking of a resolution for this year, I realised that the best way for me to be resolute is by reflecting on the past year. I reflected on everything—the joys, challenges, successes, relationships and many other aspects of my life. As I was in this “reflective zone,” feeling all Zen-like, I began to wish I could share these thoughts and memories with my family—the people that I love and trust. What a wonderful way it would be to connect as a family and truly be supportive of each other if we could reflect on the past year together and create resolutions for the upcoming year.

So I would like to extend this invitation to you, young and old, to gather your family and share your reflections; be it happy, sad, silly, stressful or even funny. It may not be the first day of the year to set resolutions, but it is never too late to create loving memories as a family.

How to Begin
Now, I can imagine your questions: “Where do I start?” or “What do we talk about?”

Wouldn’t this be awkward if you have never reflected as a family before? Or if you have never talked about personal things?

I can imagine the anxiety or concern for many families to communicate in this way. Well, maybe starting the conversation with some light-hearted questions or funny memories could help ease the awkwardness or anxiety. It does not even need to be a lengthy discussion, but it will foster a better emotional bond as a family.

Family reflection can be a very special experience. Most of us already know that we have our family’s support, love and prayers at all times. An honest discussion can be an effective way to allow them to understand that struggles, fears and challenges are part and parcel of life. Discussing solutions together as a family will also help them hone critical-thinking and problem-solving skills at a younger age.

Therefore, honour the past year by celebrating your joys, mourning your losses, solving skills at a younger age. Given the myriad benefits tied to family reflection, I truly hope that families adopt the tradition of having not just year-end family quality time, but also meaningful gatherings throughout the year.

PARTING THOUGHTS
Children look up to their parents or elders to set traditions and model strong family values. Introducing these values and traditions through reflection time will add more depth and meaning, as we can easily tie them to real situations and experiences.

Therefore, honour the past year by celebrating your joys, mourning your losses and shaking your head at the wonder of it all. Isn’t it amazing how another year has passed? Let’s embrace the new year—united as a family.

Here are some questions to get you started as you reflect together with your family. Share your answers together!

1. Pick three words to describe this past year.
2. What was the best thing that happened to you this past year?
3. What was the most challenging thing that happened to you?
4. What single achievement are you most proud of?
5. What was an unexpected joy this past year?
6. What was an unexpected obstacle that you faced?
7. What was the bravest thing you did this year?
8. What was your biggest personal change from January to December of this past year?
9. What new things did you discover about yourself?
10. What experience would you love to relive all over again?
11. Was there anything you did for the very first time in your life this past year?
12. What or who are you most thankful for?
13. What was your favourite thing we did as a family this year?
14. What was the best part about our family holiday?
15. Is there something we did as a family this year that you think you’ll remember for the rest of your life?
16. What is your favourite thing to do with the family?
17. What did you love most about being in our family this year?
18. What do you think was most challenging for our family this year?
19. Are there any funny memories of the family from 2015?
20. Was there anyone in the family who inspired or motivated you to do something this past year?
21. Pick three words to describe each of your family member’s year. Don’t ask, but try to guess based on what you know about the past year.
22. How do you hope 2016 will be different for you?
23. Create a phrase or statement that describes this past year for you and your family.
24. What should be our New Year’s resolution as a family for 2016?
25. Now that you know each other’s reflections for 2015, what are your hopes for each family member this year?