ARE YOU HAPPY?

HAPPINESS. When that word is brought up, do we raise our hands in utter joy and proclaim that it is a daily experience? Or do we cringe and shake our heads, sighing in despair as we are reminded of an ideal that we used to hold on to dearly in the past?

I have taken some time to reflect on this particular emotion in the past few months, and have come to a realisation that it is a space so vast that no amount of concentrated thinking, deliberation or reflection could somehow formulate an equation that would bring about happiness.

Everyone’s journey in life is tremendously unique. The choices that we make bring us to very different paths. Hence, the journey of pursuing happiness is also unique for every individual.

On a personal note, it is about being comfortable in my own skin, knowing what I want at any given time, who I want to be, and how I will be when I get there. When I am able to answer those questions without feeling a sense of contradiction internally, then I would have attained happiness at that moment.

However, there are also multiple views of how happiness could be attained, and why we should be pursuing it. In fact, some have gone as far as to say that it is their chief aim as human beings to experience happiness as well?

Some have made it their primary goal in life to be happy, and have dedicated a substantial amount of time and resources chasing it. Some have wallowed in self-pity and depression, going in the exact opposite direction. My question: If it is as all-consuming and exciting as some have made it out to be, don’t they want to experience the “mountain peaks” and the “valleys” of life, exposing us to the various emotions that a person could possibly feel. What makes someone a happy person?

If we observe International Day of Happiness tomorrow, let’s focus on what we can do to bring that sense of happiness into our lives.

Here are three ways to a happy life, according to scientists:

1. PRACTISING GRATITUDE CAN HELP YOU LEAD A HAPPIER LIFE

When you’re thankful, you’re more likely to be a more joyful person according to researchers at the University of California, Berkeley. Expressing gratitude has also been proven to generate a more optimistic outlook on life and can even help lower stress levels.

Dr Robert Emmons, gratitude researcher and psychology professor at the University of California, Davis, said, “Life is a series of problems that has to be solved—and a lot of times those problems cause stress.” He added, “Gratitude can be that stress buster.”

2. GET UP AND GET MOVING!

Setting some time for a sweat session may not cause happiness, but it can contribute to it. As we observe International Day of Happiness tomorrow, let’s focus on making time for happiness.

As we go through life, it is important that we have the same amount of determination and can-do attitude that would help us weather any kind of storm that comes our way.

May the pages ahead be as insightful, engaging and purposeful to you, as they have been for me. Have a wonderful and happy weekend ahead.

Carpe diem,
IAN LEE
Editor
www.leaderonomics.com

THE HAPPIEST PEOPLE DON’T JUST NECESSARILY HAVE THE BEST OF EVERYTHING. THEY JUST MAKE THE BEST OF EVERYTHING THEY HAVE. —ANONYMOUS

SOME people struggle to find happiness. Perhaps, it’s due to how people perceive happiness, instead of actually letting themselves experience pleasure or feel content.

As we observe International Day of Happiness tomorrow, let’s focus on what we can do to bring that sense of happiness into our lives.

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Besides working out for a more toned physique, physical activity helps our bodies produce disease-fighting proteins—called antibodies—and our brains release endorphins.

While antibodies boost happiness by keeping illnesses at bay, endorphins are feel-good chemicals that improve your mood while promoting feelings of euphoria.

To top it all off, research suggests that regular activity may lead to lasting happiness.

3. LET IT GO

And no, this is not a reference to Frozen. However, adopting this outlook can certainly boost overall happiness. Often, it is easier said than done.

Therefore, it is vital to detach yourself from negativity such as misfortunes, worries and regrets.

According to therapist Mark Sichel, holding onto resentment and hurt can bind you to the past, and it marks a decision to continue suffering.

So, it is important to make the choice to be happy by forgiving people who hurt you, and moving away from your past that brought you down.

What other ways would you like to see added to this list? Write to us at editor@leaderonomics.com to grow this list.

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

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!
By LIM LAY HSUAN
editor@leaderonomics.com

The UAE recently appointed Ohood Al Roumi as the country's first-ever minister of state for happiness. You heard it right. It's a special portfolio in the UAE leadership to align and drive government policy in creating social good and satisfaction.

THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

The growing global interest in pursuing happiness probably stemmed from Bhutan's determined pursuit to measure national progress in terms of gross national happiness (GNH), instead of gross domestic product, as reflected in their famous 2010 GNH Index. It has even led the United Nations to decree March 20 as International Day of Happiness since 2012.

In the World Happiness Report 2015, released by Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), one of the factors used to rank level of happiness among countries include social capital; besides subjective well-being and economic development.

Social capital is a measure of the quality of interpersonal relations, involving trust, honesty and mutual support, whereby these will eventually increase mental and physical well-being. The higher the social capital, the more individuals are willing to "sacrifice" for the greater good. This will likely result in higher economic productivity and greater mutual care.

SOCIAL CAPITAL IN ORGANISATION

At the organisational level, the term "social capital" is relevant too. Happy and engaged employees are always good for the company. The positive vibe and energy in such organisations are conducive for creativity and camaraderie.

With camaraderie, comes close and honest relationships among each other, and it shows when employees become the company's greatest advocates outside of working environment.

Happy employees also generally enjoy better health, and that itself contributes to company productivity because there will be fewer cases of absenteeism.

In a "win-win" scenario, as the company puts in effort to invest in employees’ happiness and well-being, you will begin to see them more willing to go the extra mile for the company too.

Susan David, who wrote an article entitled How Happy Is Your Organization?, listed some pertinent questions for business leaders to ask themselves:

1. Do my employees laugh?
2. Do they enjoy their relationships and their environment at work?
3. Do they get to use their ingenuity?
4. Are they in the right roles?
5. Do they understand the organisation's purpose?
6. Do they feel like they are a part of something that matters?

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In his Being Happy workshop last November 2015, Eugene Tee, a senior lecturer with the department of psychology at a local university, likens us to cultivating happiness as how we tend a garden.

The principles behind sowing seeds of gratitude, limiting unhealthy comparisons, savouring the moment, pursuing meaningful goals, building connections and being part of something greater are applicable in our personal life, and at the workplace too.

If you have not tended to this "garden of happiness" at the workplace in a while, it's high time that you do. If you do not have this garden at all, start planning for one now.

The top 10 happiest countries in the world, according to the World Happiness Report 2016 (just released on March 16):

1. Denmark
2. Switzerland
3. Iceland
4. Norway
5. Finland
6. Canada
7. Netherlands
8. New Zealand
9. Australia
10. Sweden

What do you think of this list? Do you think Malaysia should be in the top 10 list of happiest countries in the world? Share your thoughts with us at editor@leaderonomics.com.
GROW, BUILD, TRANSFORM.

AT LEADERONOMICS, we believe leaders can profoundly affect the social, economic and spiritual health of communities they belong to. And we believe that all human beings have the potential for leadership. No matter who you are, what you do and whatever challenges are hampering your progress, Leaderonomics can help you and your organisation achieve maximum potential.

For tools, tips, tutorials, inspiring stories and knowledge to help you grow in your leadership, log on to www.leaderonomics.com
PUTTING YOUR NEEDS FIRST

WITH de-tariffication and digitisation paving the way into the local insurance industry today, insurance companies must be quick to adapt to these changes.

This is crucial in order to meet customers’ expectations, and to remain relevant within the insurance landscape.

Grace Quah, head of agency distribution at AmGeneral Insurance Bhd (AmGeneral), talks to Leaderonomics about what the company is doing to provide support for its huge network of agents which represent both of AmGeneral’s brands, Kurnia and AmAssurance.

“This is a time of change for the industry and we at AmGeneral are always looking for ways to support our agents through necessary developments. We see our agents as a crucial partner in the way that we do business and that is why we need to work together.” — Grace Quah

SUPPORTING THOSE WHO MATTER

As AmGeneral makes its way towards the digital era, Quah is ensuring that their agents are able to ride the same wave.

She said, “We have developed agent websites to allow for our agents’ customers to transact online. Some might say going online negates the need for an intermediary, but, we feel that the value agents are able to bring to customers, goes beyond the point of buying or renewing a policy.

“It is thus important that we make it easy for agents to do business with us too.”

The support and collaboration with agents does not stop there. When asked, Quah who also sits on the Distribution Management Sub-Committee of General Insurance Association of Malaysia, is quick to list out the various other support and tools that AmGeneral provides to its agent network.

“At the end of the day, their customer is our customer, so, we’ve established ways to help our agents work better and do it better,” she added.

One of AmGeneral’s recent initiatives is focused on policy renewals and providing agents with a host of services to help them connect with customers on their policy renewal reminders. This includes short message service (SMS), mail, and an outbound call centre that makes calls to customers, all on behalf of the agent.

Quah shared that they have also developed an agency sales dashboard that allows agents to track and manage their own performance.

With the growing competitiveness of the insurance industry, especially with the eventual de-tariffication in the Malaysian general insurance market, Quah explained the significance of providing quality service.

“My main priority is to ensure our agents are ready to participate in a digitised market and to stay relevant in this industry. This involves not only high levels of service, but also technical knowledge of insurance products, so they are able to provide the right advice to customers when managing their risks.”

With the upcoming national roll-out of de-tariffication, Quah stressed the importance of providing agents with the right tools so they are able to serve their customers better.

KEEPPING IT SIMPLE FOR CONSUMERS

Whilst insurance companies hope that nothing unfortunate happens to their customers, AmGeneral is committed to always be there to help in any eventuality.

That is when the claims department comes in to provide customers with the due care that they deserve. Arron Mann, the head of claims at AmGeneral said, “The biggest misconception that consumers have is that insurance companies don’t want to pay claims.

“I can assure everyone that at AmGeneral Insurance, we absolutely want to pay legitimate claims. In fact, we pay out approximately RM1.2bil per annum to customers. That’s about RM4mil per working day that goes back into the community to help customers.”

Having spent 20 years in the insurance industry in Australia and Malaysia, Mann brings with him a depth of experience and knowledge.

He shared that for claims, the focus for him is to balance the need for great service with sustainable cost management, which is what AmGeneral aims to achieve with a team of 450 people in the claims department.

An example Mann provided was of a recent bus crash that claimed the lives of several Malaysians.

He said, “Obviously this was a terrible situation, and almost immediately we knew that the travel policy was written through us for the people on that trip. We had settlement cheques ready for the rest of the family within four days of the incident because we didn’t want them to worry about insurance or claims. We know that in that situation, nothing will make it better, but, our aim was to ensure they had one less thing to worry about.

“This is indicative of how we want to help customers and the importance of being customer-centric in your thinking, as opposed to being process-driven.

When asked about the claims process in AmGeneral, Mann said, “Whilst I can walk you through the process, we feel that a customer should not have to worry about the details. After all, that’s what they pay us to do.

To simplify things, we ask customers to remember one thing and that is to ‘call us first’. As our insurance company, we deal with thousands of claims per day so, we know what to do and can keep them informed along the way.

As part of the drive to simplify the claims process for customers, AmGeneral launched their new and improved Kurnia and AmAssurance One Touch App for customers to get what they need at their fingertips.

Mann said, “We may not be perfect in everything that we do, but our intentions are honourable and we are constantly looking at how we can alleviate the pain points experienced by customers.”

To embed customer-centricity in the organisation, AmGeneral uses in-depth customer surveys to drive process changes in the company. This allows for the company to understand what customers essentially want and to continuously improve the services provided.

He said, “This includes incremental things like SMS updates to customers on the progress of their claims, proactive follow-ups, and overhauls of other areas.

“For example, our windscreen claims process was one area we identified as needing a change. Based on the feedback received, we made changes and

The apps include the following uses:

- Locating nearby car workshops
- Finding a preferred agent
- One touch dialling function to the company’s 24-hour Auto Assist (KAA) call centre for immediate assistance— Breakdown Assistance, Accident Assist
- Taking photos of the damage(s) to the vehicle and of the accident scene
- Completing simple claim details on the App and starting off the claims process

By customers.”

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PARTING THOUGHTS

With a focus on listening to their customers first, Quah and Mann are set on enhancing AmGeneral’s service delivery as part of the company’s ambition of becoming the most trusted insurer in Malaysia.

“I hope for more information about AmGeneral, visit www.amgeneralsurance.com.

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IS THE GRASS GREENER ON THE OTHER SIDE?

By Rosihan Thiran

When we compare what we have as infirmities, we become envious and it makes us grumpy, visiting us on the other side.

Most enviousness, when comparing ourselves with others and feeling capa-

bles, we fall into the trap of pride. We all know that pride always comes before a fall.

The COKE WAR, COCA-COLA AND PEPSI

The classic example of “the grass is greener” syndrome in business hap-
penned in the 1980s between Coca-Cola and Pepsi.

Robert C. Goizueta, one of the most successful Coca-Cola executives in this past century, began his reign as president-and later chairman of Coca-Cola USA, when its market capita-

lization was around US$135 billion.

Yet, he proceeded, I believe, is the biggest disaster in Coca-Cola’s history— their New Coke saga. The key reason for this disaster: the grass is greener on the other side.

For most of the 20th century Pepsi had always profiled second place in the US market. But then came the second half of the 1980s when Coca-Cola introduced New Coke, reinvented their market and improved pro-
duction of their Old Coke.

Yet the New Coke introduced a new formula to their best-selling drink, in spite of being number one? Simple. They were comparing themselves to Pepsi.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

So, what is the problem? When we compare ourselves with others, we tend to try imitating them, feeling inferior, and become unhappy and upset simply by wanting what others have. We become unhappy and upset simply by wanting what others have. We start feeling miserable, envious, believing that other people are luckier and have more than us.

When New Coke was announced, most ignored the fact that the grass is always greener on the other side.

But occasionally, especially in strong competitive environments, we have it really good today. We then start feeling miserable, envious and dissatisfied because we have little. We are taken over by feelings of ‘not having enough’—what we have. In Oliver Stone’s 1987 classic, Wall Street, Gordon Gekko (played by Michael Douglas) declares that great and good businesses “are created only in places where you water them.”

When we compare and become envious, you are driven to make foolish mistakes and irrational decisions.

ENVY AND GREED

When we believe that the grass is always greener on the other side, we tend to become envious, believing that other people are luckier and have more than us.

Then, we start feeling miserable, envious and dissatisfied because we have little. We are taken over by feelings of ‘not having enough’—what we have. In Oliver Stone’s 1987 classic, Wall Street, Gordon Gekko (played by Michael Douglas) declares that great and good businesses “are created only in places where you water them.”

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When we compare, we get upset and result in anger.

Comparisons deprive us of our purpose. (To read my previous article on our purpose, check happiness.is.

Comparison is a losing battle.

The ones who succeed are those who are focused on improving themselves daily.

Leaving our, during my son’s sports class, he asked, “What is the most admired

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THE COSTS OF HAPPINESS

DO THIS AND YOU WILL BE HAPPY. COUNTLESS ARTICLES, ADVERTISEMENTS AND BILLBOARDS SCREAM THIS MESSAGE AT US THROUGHOUT OUR DAILY LIVES.

By TAMARA JAYNE
editor@leaderonomics.com

W hat motivates you? What keeps you awake, going about your routines, and not burning out? Whatever your answers may be, find a purpose in it. Finding the purpose and what keeps you motivated may not be an easy task.

Michael Norton, an associate professor at Harvard Business School, analysed various groups of people and concluded that money can buy happiness when it is not spent on oneself, but on others.

Norton said there was no noticeable difference in people who had spent money on themselves compared with those who had spent money on others. When the purpose included prosocial spending, happiness levels increased.

As author Mark Manson put it, “Being motivated by money for the sake of happiness leads to unstable emotional regulation and a lot of obnoxious and superficial behaviour.”

“Being motivated by money so that one can provide a good life for their family and children, is a much sturdier foundation to work with. That deeper purpose will motivate one through the stress and fear and inevitable complications that a more superficial motivation would not.”

Manson continued, “Being motivated by the approval of others leads to needy and unattractive behaviour. Being motivated by the approval of others because you’re an artist and you want to construct art that moves and inspires people in new and powerful ways, is far more sustainable and noble. You’ll be able to work through disapproval, embarrassments and the occasional disaster.”

Don’t be mistaken, there is nothing wrong with spending money on yourself or wanting approval from others, but finding a stable purpose behind what you do will keep you moving forward in times when you find it hard to get out of bed.

In our “It’s not me, it’s you” culture, we have become used to finding comfort in knowing we are not the cause of our own predicaments.

But, real change only happens when we are able to take responsibility for our own actions in order to be happy.

Comparing about something is like trying to force the wrong jigsaw piece into a puzzle and wondering why the picture is taking forever to form.

Doing something to make that change makes the difference. Take other pieces from the jigsaw and keep trying until the right one fits.

USING COMPARISONS TO YOUR ADVANTAGE, NOT DISADVANTAGE

Comparisons can be seen everywhere. It’s how we embrace the notion that for Apple to win, Microsoft has to lose. We have to embrace the notion that for Apple to win, Apple has to do a really good job.”

Most of us may have learnt from young that eventually comparisons shape us based on what we make of them. We may strive to be better and to see someone else’s gain as inspiration, or, we may strive to be better and to see someone else’s gain as inspiration, or, we may choose to sink in our own shortcomings.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Knowing your worth allows you to look at the praise of others as motivation rather than intimidation. It’s easier said than done, of course. But when we understand that the biggest competitor is usually ourselves, we won’t be as easily offended by others’ successes.

When criticism or failure is handed to us, it’s in bouncing back stronger than before that makes the difference.

For the most part, the biggest critic is usually ourselves. We often measure our own weaknesses to someone else’s strengths while criticizing ourselves for not living up to the high standards we set. Comparisons happen. It’s how we gauge progress or know which benchmark to begin with.

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Steve Jobs once said, “We have to let go of this notion that for Apple to win, Microsoft has to lose. We have to embrace the notion that for Apple to win, Apple has to do a really good job.”

We can clearly see how that worked out for Apple.
HOW SELF-REGULATION IS KEY TO LONG-TERM GOALS

By LOUISA DEVADASON
editor@leaderonomics.com

I am guilty. Guilty of letting my feelings get the better of me, eating more than I should, or carousing in one sitting and letting deadlines drift past me.

I sincerely believe and hope, that someone reading this shares all or some of these experiences. I doubt I’m alone in this because it is a quirk of humans to be complex—often times—paradoxical. We crave peace but often start fights. We crave success but often procrastinate in achieving it. We crave a fit body but over a few minutes.

Before leaving, the experimenter gave the child a simple choice: if the child waited until the researcher returned, he or she could have two marshmallows. If the child couldn’t wait, they could ring the bell and the researcher would return immediately, but they would only be given one marshmallow.

It’s human nature to do what we want, when we want with little forethought, and that often result in a lot of regret in the future. It’s the hippie in us who is in love with the idea of happiness, freedom of expression and being liberated from societal expectations. Unless you become a nomad, it’s not that simple.

THE MARSHMALLOW EXPERIMENT

The Stanford Marshmallow experiment, led by psychologist Walter Mischel, obtained fascinating insight into deferred-gratification development as well as correlations between deferred-gratification and future life outcomes.

The study was simple. Thirty-two children, aged four to six years old, were presented a plate of marshmallows in a room that consisted of just them and the experimenter. The child was informed that the researcher needed to leave the room for a few minutes.

Psychologist, researcher and proponent of positive psychology, Dr Martin Seligman, said, “The belief that we can rely on shortcuts to happiness, joy, rapture, comfort, and ecstasy, rather than be entitled to these feelings by the exercise of personal strengths and virtues, leads to legions of people who, in the middle of great wealth are starving of expression and being liberated from societal expectations. Unless you become a nomad, it’s not that simple.”

Our well-being, our acceptance of who we are, our happiness; starts with us. It’s often used interchangeably with emotion we regulate is probably stress. Emotional self-regulation is tricky as it can be situational. The most common emotion we regulate is probably stress. With that in mind, we can deploy three forms of coping:

1. Emotion-based coping
Learn to reduce negative emotions through talking out your feelings with a confidant, prayer or meditation, exercise or doing an activity that brings you joy.

2. Problem-based coping
Begin troubleshooting ways you can improve the circumstances or figure out how you can approach the situation. Recognise what you can change and accept what is not up to you.

3. Avoidant-based coping
This is a tricky one that can often be misused, but it’s not the worst thing to take a break from your current reality by going on vacation, reading an uplifting book or just taking time away from the problem and redirecting your energy elsewhere.

Cognitive & Behavioural Self-Regulation

Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is a form of psychotherapy used to treat several mental disorders. The premise of CBT, however, is useful in daily interactions as it makes one more aware of one’s thoughts, feelings and behaviours. Start by writing down your thoughts about a situation. Then, write how you behaved and note how you felt.

1. Start an exercise programme and stick to it every day for a week.
2. Refrain from gossiping or saying mean things about others for at least a week.
3. When you feel you’re losing your temper, take a breath and count to 10.
4. Practise “implementation intentions” such as “the next time I’m at a restaurant, I will order a healthy salad.”

Emotional self-regulation is tricky as it can be situational. The most common emotion we regulate is probably stress. With that in mind, we can deploy three forms of coping:

1. Emotion-based coping
Learn to reduce negative emotions through talking out your feelings with a confidant, prayer or meditation, exercise or doing an activity that brings you joy.

2. Problem-based coping
Begin troubleshooting ways you can improve the circumstances or figure out how you can approach the situation. Recognise what you can change and accept what is not up to you.

3. Avoidant-based coping
This is a tricky one that can often be misused, but it’s not the worst thing to take a break from your current reality by going on vacation, reading an uplifting book or just taking time away from the problem and redirecting your energy elsewhere.

COGNITIVE & BEHAVIOURAL SELF-REGULATION

Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is a form of psychotherapy used to treat several mental disorders. The premise of CBT, however, is useful in daily interactions as it makes one more aware of one’s thoughts, feelings and behaviours. Start by writing down your thoughts about a situation. Then, write how you behaved and note how you felt.

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It’s best to start training self-regulation muscles from early childhood but it’s never too late. It’s not easy and it takes time, so be kind to yourself.

Like any muscle, using it too hard and too much will cause fatigue and set you back, but like any muscle, practice makes it stronger, so be mindful of the balance you create and the goals you set.

Remember: Slow and steady wins the race, so be patient and keeping working on your inner self so you can enjoy a happiness that comes from deep within.

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PUTTING THE SPOTLIGHT ON SPOTLIGHT

3 LESSONS WE CAN LEARN FROM THE FILM

By CARMEN NGE
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Caution: Spoilers ahead!

WEN Spotlight took home the Oscar for Best Picture this year, I was elated because it is rare to see movies about investigative journalism get the recognition they deserve. Earlier films like All the President’s Men (1976) and Good Night and Good Luck (2005) received nominations but never coveted an Oscar for Best Picture.

What connects these films is an overt acknowledgement of the role that journalists play in shaping the history of a nation—in this case, the United States—and its people. As a member of the Fourth Estate, the press or news media fulfills an important role as the guardians of public interest.

Spotlight, based on a true story, charts the journey taken by a team of journalists from The Boston Globe newspaper to uncover a child sex abuse scandal involving Catholic priests in Boston.

As you can imagine, this was a highly sensitive issue to research and investigate, especially considering the fact that 53% of the newspaper's subscribers at the time were Catholic.

Yet, the Spotlight team persisted and persevered in and end, exposed a scandal that had huge repercussions on Catholic churches worldwide that continue to reverberate until today.

For me, watching Spotlight taught me many lessons about the power of journalism, but what I did not expect was how much it taught me about leadership and teamwork in a highly stressful environment.

Here are three nuggets of wisdom I took away from the film:

**1 LEADERS INTRODUCE NEW PERSPECTIVES WITH COURTESY AND RESPECT**

The idea to pursue a story about the Roman Catholic Church was actually mooted by Martin Baron, a newcomer to The Boston Globe who was hired to lead the newspaper as its editor.

As the outsider, he brought in a fresh pair of eyes to news that had been circulating for years but were not followed-up on. The existing writers and editors were capable but they were complacent and did not want to "rock the boat" too much. Having an external leader coming in was essential because Baron was able to provide the kind of fresh perspective that engendered different ways of thinking about what was newsworthy.

Did this mean the existing editors were unable to bring new angles on old issues? No, but they just needed to be prodded to do so.

As the new leader, Baron was not afraid to propose new ideas but he did this in a calm and diplomatic manner. Rather than tell Walter "Robby" Robinson, the editor of the Spotlight team, to do as he was told, Baron instead made a polite request: "Would you consider taking this case?"

Baron was always civil and courteous to the members of his team; even in the most stressful situations. He never raised his voice and never spoke without carefully considering the impact of his words. This was Baron's way of respecting his colleagues, even though they were also his subordinates.

2 **LEADERS LEAD WITH COURAGE**

Baron’s courage to pursue a sensitive and potentially explosive issue rubbed off on his colleagues. Knowing that Baron was unafraid to seek the truth and to expose those in power, Robby was able to doggedly chase the story, despite the many obstacles in his path.

Robby also constantly encouraged and praised his own teammates when they were persistent and dauntless; he understood that courage is not innate but needs to be fostered and appreciated. As a result, they excelled at their job and refused to be hampered by setbacks, regardless of how serious the situation could be.

So yes, courage is infectious. When more people become brave, they then become emboldened by their mission and are indefatigable. Leaders often want such passionate and dedicated employees, but, the former forget that they need to be the first to lead the charge.

3 **LEADERS FOSTER TEAM SPIRIT BY OCCASIONALLY DOING THE GRUNT WORK**

One of the best moments in the film, for me, was when Robby joined the rest of his team to sift through years of the Church’s annual directories to locate and identify priests suspected of child sexual abuse.

The task of spending weeks going through old and dusty stacks of directories, spending long hours poring over thousands of pages of names in tiny print, collating the information and then keying them into spreadsheets, is nothing but tedious.

But Robby never pushed the boring and mundane tasks to his subordinates only to reap the glory of their results for himself. Robby told his team: "It takes a lot of work but not if we’re all on it." And when he said all, he was clearly not joking.

Teamwork involves every member of the team and a leader never forgets that he or she is as much a part of the team as everyone else.

By sharing the grunt work, Robby was able to not only better appreciate what his team did on a daily basis but he was also able to propose solutions to problems based on the kind of details he discovered during the process.

Robby may not have regarded his subordinates as his equal in rank, but he valued their contributions as being equal to his. He knew that the story could only be told with everyone on board, working hard as a cohesive team.

FINAL THOUGHT

All that teamwork definitely paid off for the Spotlight team in real life because they won journalism’s most coveted award—the Pulitzer Prize in 2003—for all their efforts. And that, I am sure, trumps any Oscar!
THE TWO SIDES OF EVERYTHING

By ETHAN GANES
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IFE is like a flip of the coin. Without knowing the heads and tails of things, the experience simply isn’t the same. Without understanding both sides of everything, it can be hard to see the beauty of the big picture.

My 16th year of life was like sugar; it was sweet. It started off as a nice year—nothing much happened—until other things were introduced to me. It was just another day after school when I visited Dropzone, Leaderonomics’ Youth Centre in Peta Jaya, where a friend of mine who works there introduced me to DIODE. She told me that Leaderonomics has a DIODE Youth Leadership Camp and that it would be a good experience for me.

At that point, the only things I had associated leadership with were over-achieving individuals who boss people around. I was hesitant, never having been the kind to prioritise leadership. The classic excuses were forming a formidable queue on my lips when something hit me.

I realised that my friend, an adult, was able to treat a 16-year-old as an equal rather than as a teenager. And her colleague was very different from the typical adults that I knew and interacted with.

A new thought formed in my mind: “Perhaps I should see how these people can show me what leadership really is.”

MY FIRST EXPERIENCE WITH DIODE CAMPS

Time flew by and before I knew it, the time for camp had come. I was quite sure it wouldn’t be too hard for me, seeing as I had gotten to know some of the facilitators already. Well, I was wrong.

The campers were split into groups of seven or eight, and there were many challenges from the start. Communication was tough as there were language barriers up to the point of mass confusion. Even playing physical games was tough as most of us weren’t athletic.

It was a struggle because I was forced out of my comfort zone, not to mention the competition between groups to score the most points. For the first time in a long time, I didn’t know what to do. As the days passed, it became clear that if the camp was a puzzle, the participants held different pieces.

Through the sessions and games, I began to notice that some of us were better at sports, some of us were better at strategising and some of us were better at art. We all realised that what one could not do, the others could.

We worked together, realising that if we played by our strengths, we could lift any weight. I had the chance to step up and learn how to manage very different people. We clicked as a group and we clicked as friends. At the end of camp, we were the group with the highest points.

I went home, dumbfounded. There’s no better word for it. I had never stepped up to lead before. I realised that through my years of school, I had never once stepped up that way.

I only had a year left and decided that I would make the best of it. With a simple switch of mindset, my life changed. I took part in debates, joined clubs and took leading roles. I took up public speaking and found that I loved it.

The six days of camp opened up my world to possibilities and showed me that leadership wasn’t as alien as it seemed.

NEW YEAR, NEW OPPORTUNITIES

My year as a 17-year-old was the most productive by far. It was a late start but like my father loves to say, better late than never. Stepping up and being active was challenging, but nevertheless, it was fruitful. I was satisfied with the way my year went.

Once again, it was just another typical day and I was going through my emails. To my surprise, Leaderonomics invited me to apply as a facilitator for a DIODE Youth Leadership Camp. It was the same camp that I had the privilege to attend.

I was hesitant, knowing I had big shoes to fill if I were to take up the role. It hit me and I realised that I would have the chance to open minds the way mine was not too long ago. Immediately, I applied to become a camp facilitator and to my absolute delight, my application went through.

Once again, the time for camp had come. As I watched the campers come in, I saw myself—the Ethan a year ago—in every one of them. It thrilled me to think that if all my cards were played right, they too, would receive the DIODE experience.

As a facilitator, I helped with the sessions and games. I saw through a different pair of lens, of how each group was so different and how each one faced great challenges. I saw how the games and sessions challenged them and made them struggle. I saw how the facilitator role was played and how we all had the pleasure of guiding the campers.

Throughout the six days, I was given the chance to mentor a group. In the process, we learnt a lot from each other. I had the opportunity to nudge campers towards leadership. It was a very different experience, but just as I was moved as a camper, I was moved as a facilitator too.

PARTING THOUGHTS

As mentioned earlier, many things in life are like the flip of a coin. I saw the heads and tails of DIODE’s Youth Leadership Camp and the flip of this particular coin led to a beautiful picture. DIODE Camps offered me a leadership challenge and I had the honour of offering others that very same experience.

Since then, I have gone on to facilitate two other camps and had even taken up the role of game master for the Leaderonomics Youth team.

In every camp, we experience different things, different people, and different scenarios. As unique as each one is, there is one prominent constant: the two sides of DIODE Camps have never failed to move me.
The average person spends 2,200 hours a year at work according to Federal Reserve Economic Data. Whilst the number might vary regionally, it’s highly likely that you probably spend more time at work than at home (with the exception of those working from home).

Hence, it’s essential for us to create a conducive and energised working environment.

This has surfaced to the forefront of many organisational discussions in recent times. Employers have realised that a lively environment makes for company culture and morale.

One study found that happy employees, which increases productivity, which in turn reaps greater revenue.

The question is: how can you create such an environment? Try these 10 tips!

**1. COLOUR POP**
Recent studies have revealed that colour can have a large impact on employee well-being and creativity at work. The findings suggest participants scored 20% higher on creativity tests in a green environment, yellow promoted a livelier and more social environment, while brainstorming in blue surroundings produced twice as many solutions compared to red.

However, if repainting the whole office seems expensive or presents an overload of colour, some bright office accessories like yellow stationery or green carpets will suffice.

**2. LET THERE BE LIGHT!**
Exposure to sunlight increases the brain’s release of a neurotransmitter called serotonin—associated with increased happiness and overall well-being.

Dim lighting tricks the brain into feeling drowsy and relaxed; it does make concentration and productivity during the day much harder!

Dim light isn’t an option at your office, using light fixtures with adjustable filters will do the trick too.

**3. HOME SWEET OFFICE**
Here’s the thing: employees need a workspace away from home to maintain that all-important work-life balance, but that doesn’t mean work has to be sterile and dull. Offices and workspaces can be made cosy and homely with art pieces, rugs, bean bags and throw pillows.

Fruits, vegetables and nuts are great options. These healthy snacks provide a great midday boost to the brain—improving mood and productivity. If these healthy snacks are easily available, your team will be more likely to stay at work to eat healthy rather than wander the shops in the vicinity looking for unhealthy food items to energise them.

**4. FLORA**
Plants will add beauty to your workspace or the whole office and will be a breath of life in your concrete jungle. Be sure to pick plants that are low-maintenance and to keep the leaves trimmed so that they don’t make your desk look cluttered.

**5. ONE FUN DAY**
Allocate time to incorporate employee-led activities to bond as a company. Include events like monthly birthday celebrations and other activities like company lunches, ice breakers or even company fitness routines, to name a few.

The event could take place midweek to break up the monotony of the week and be used to appreciate employees for their hard work, while improving company culture and morale.

**6. DE-CLUTTER**
When you have to push things aside to find a clear spot, you know it is time to tackle the desktop clutter. Before jumping into this project and tossing everything in a cluttered mind.

De-cluttering helps ease your tension and makes collaboration much easier. Plan encourages cross-pollination between employees, by creating an amiable and creative environment.

**7. SCENTS**
Pleasant odours have been found to improve memory performance. An article by Apartment Therapy stated that these five scents can help boost productivity: cinnamon, mint, lemon, orange and rosemary.

You can introduce these scents with strategically placed candles, oil burners and diffusers.

**8. OPEN-OFFICE PLAN**
An open-office seating plan encourages cross-pollination of ideas, as well as camaraderie between employees, by creating an amiable and creative environment. Additionally, more departments can work together on the same floor, and that makes collaboration much easier.

**9. MUSIC MATTERS**
Background music at a moderate volume improves concentration. Mid-tempo music with subtle melodies works well too.

Allow your employees to listen to music (as long as they’re not talking to customers) and that also depends on the nature of your industry while they work to lift their spirits. Alternatively, crowdsource playlists or let employees take turns to deejay!

**10. SNACKS**
Many offices offer coffee and biscuits to their employees. Why not offer some healthy snacks as well? Fruits, vegetables and nuts are great

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