YOUR ULTIMATE LEADERSHIP GUIDE

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YOUR ULTIMATE LEADERSHIP GUIDE

Saturday 14 May 2016

TEN STRATEGIES WHEN DEALING WITH STRESS

STRESS Is Good For You

WHY STRESS IS NOT HARMFUL FOR YOU

HOW TO AVOID FINANCIAL WORRIES

This leadership guide is powered by Leaderonomics. Log on to www.leaderonomics.com to download this week’s pullout.
DON'T LET TRAFFIC STEAL YOUR LIFE

BY ASEEM PURI
editor@leaderonomics.com

A close friend of mine told me recently that she comes to her office at six in the morning to avoid the traffic. Another smart advertising professional showed me how she often does her hair, nails and makeup while being stuck in traffic for two hours. If you spend more than an hour commuting to work, then you have just lost three weeks of your year on the road. For some people, that’s more than the entire vacation time they will ever get. It is a complete and thorough waste, not to mention the enormous stress, pollution and endless waiting that can frustrate the most patient of humans.

It doesn’t have to be this way. Here are seven solutions you can implement immediately that can help you reclaim your life.

1. MEETING DAY
If you are in sales or you have to meet clients regularly, schedule one to two days where you conduct most of your meetings outside of the office. Inform your boss that you will leave straight to the client’s and then back home as there’s no need to head back to the office.

2. ‘WORK FROM HOME’ DAY
If your work primarily involves e-mails, phone calls and your computer, have you considered doing it from home? Discuss with your entire team about you working from home. Reason with the boss that the wastewater, not to mention the enormous stress, pollution and endless waiting that can frustrate the most patient of humans.

3. INVEST IN HIGH QUALITY INTERNET
Send a little extra on high-quality Internet connection that is portable and that allows you to stay connected no matter where you are. Once people understand that working from home does not mean delays in response, they will become more accepting of the solution.

4. ‘TIME AWAY’ FRIDAY
We always ignore the important for the urgent. Once in a month, why not pick a Friday where you and your team can go out to a nice place like a park or a museum to do a team activity or brainstorm on a topic?

5. MOVE TO A SMALLER TOWN
Every town in a city where the travel time between office and home is just 10 minutes? Look for the nicest small town where you can work and explore. Who knows, maybe you can walk to work and spend the extra hours with your kids and loved ones.

6. UPGRADE THE COMMUTE
Sometimes, we cannot avoid commuting completely. Ask yourself these questions: How can I make my commute more enjoyable and enjoyable instead of a stressful experience? Is it worthwhile upgrading to a better train or bus? Should I pay more to carpool or should I get a taxi one-way and public transportation the other way? Would it be worth upgrading to a better train or bus?

7. TRAVEL LIGHT
Often our bags, much like the past, weigh us down. What if you could leave your bag and its heavy content in office? Would it force you to get work done and travel light?

Note: RM1000 registration fee (Kuala Lumpur, 10, Perkarangan Tun Ismail, 50480 Kuala Lumpur)

Date: May 22, 2016 (Sun)
Time: 9am
Venue: Lanai Kijang (10, Perkarangan Tun Ismail, 50480 Kuala Lumpur)
Note: RM1000 registration fee for up to 5 people

This unique event will have 10 CSR and volunteer teams from Malaysian business, non-governmental organisations, and service communities, all uniting to give back and make a difference for others who are less fortunate. Leaderonomics is the event partner. Together We Can Change the World.

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!

The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires. —William Arthur Ward
ELECTRONIC DEVICES ARE ROBBING YOU OF YOUR SLEEP

It’s not just because you’re addicted that you don’t want to put it down

The rise of portable technology—including smartphones, tablets and laptops—and the increase of users and “apps” have seen a corresponding increase in the amount of time people spend with them. We often use these technologies in bed, and complain that we (or a loved one) went to sleep late because we just couldn’t put our phones down. Research is showing that these smart technologies damage our sleep cycles in more ways than just enjoying them way past our bedtime.

The Science Behind Sleep Disruption
Sleep disruption doesn’t just lead to poor sleep quality and restfulness, but also productivity, and has even been linked to diabetes and cancer.

One major reason for electronic devices causing sleep disruption is due to their effect on our melatonin levels. Melatonin is an enzyme that helps us regulate our sleep cycles—it rises in the evening, and lowers in the morning and daytime. Light affects our melatonin levels, and this is one reason why some individuals get depressed during winter, when days are shorter and there are fewer hours of light (a phenomenon called Seasonal Affective Disorder).

It’s been found that short wavelength lights have a detrimental effect on our melatonin levels, suppressing melatonin production. This causes an extended disruption to our sleep regulation abilities, as it tricks our brain into thinking it’s daylight and that we should be awake and stay alert. Blue light is especially detrimental to melatonin. While all natural light contains some blue light, it is emitted in a higher concentration from the screens of electronic devices.

So, when we use these devices in the evenings and nights, we’re essentially blasting ourselves with a high dose of blue light, which disrupts our sleep cycles due to the suppression of melatonin levels. This disruption extends longer than just that evening when we use electronic devices. It can make falling asleep and waking up harder. Those exposed to blue light also feel like they are less well-rested after their sleep.

The Solution
Sleep or reduce the amount of screen time during the evenings, but this may sound like an unrealistic advice.

The other solution comes from apps and modes that are now available on your devices. These apps and programmes reduce the amount of blue light being emitted by the screens between the hours of sunset and sunrise, reducing the suppression effect on melatonin levels and subsequently our sleep regulation. These programmes are free and extremely easy to set up. Install these and get your sleep cycles back in order:

- Computer (Mac, Windows, Linux): Flux
- Android phones: Twilight app
- iPhones or iPads: Night Shift mode on iOS 9.3

Cameron Teoh is a lecturer of human factors and ergonomics/psychology with an established human factors and ergonomics/psychology with an established

For additional tips on practical ways to sleep smarter, do check out our infographic at www.leaderonomics.com/personal/ig-10-ways-to-sleep-smarter.

Alternatively scan this QR code:

This article is available at www.leaderonomics.com.

5 Things That Will Help You Sleep Better

install apps on your electronic devices, including desktop computers, to automatically regulate blue-light levels.

Dim the brightness of your electronic devices in the evenings. Most phones and tablets make it easy to adjust brightness levels. This further reduces blue light exposure, and especially in dim lighting/darkness, the screens remain very readable.

Limit exposure to digital screens, including computers, mobile phones, and tablets in the evenings.

Separate work and other daytime activities from your bed and bedroom. You want to create a strong association between your bedroom with only rest and sleep.

Develop a routine sleeping schedule where you go to bed and rise at the same time each day. Irregular sleep-wake schedules lead to poor sleep quality and quantity, meaning sleep is less restful and you get fewer hours of sleep.

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To engage with us on mindfulness training, e-mail us at training@leaderonomics.com.
10 BEST STRATEGIES TO BEAT STRESS

By TRAVIS BRADBERY
Co-founder, co-author of Emotional Intelligence 2.0, and co-founder of the world’s leading provider of emotional intelligence training, tools, and software.

T\h e ability to manage your emotions and remain calm under pressure is a direct link to your performance. A recent research was conducted with more than 600 people, and we found that 90% of top performers are skilful at managing their emotions in times of stress.

Here are some tips on how successful people stay calm:

1. **They Appreciate What They Have**
   - Taking time to contemplate what you’re grateful for (not merely the “right” thing to do) also helps reduce the levels of wakefulness when hormones cortisol by 25%.
   - Elizabeth Kirby, found that the onset of stress entices the brain into growing new cells responsible for improved memory. However, this effect is only seen when stress is intermittent.
   - Stress causes degeneration in the area of the brain responsible for learning and managing your stress levels. When stress is subjective and under your control, you can limit its effects. For example, this is why you can completely change your mood by changing your environment.

2. **They Avoid Asking What If**
   - “What if?” statements flood our mind on the fire of stress and worry. Things can go in a million different directions, and the more time you spend worrying about the possibilities, the less time you spend focusing on taking action that will help you lower anxiety and stress under your control.
   - Calm people know that asking “What if?” will only take them to a place they don’t want to go.

3. **They Stay Positive**
   - Positive thoughts help make stress more bearable by focusing your brain’s attention onto possible solutions, and reframe the situation.
   - When things are going well, and your mood is good, this is easy to do. When things are going poorly, and your mind is filled with negativity, it can be a challenge. How do you fight the flood of stress? Running from these emotional states of stress.
   - One positive thought to do on the regular is to identify one positive thing that happened, no matter how small. If you can’t think of something from the current day, reflect on the previous day. You may be surprised finding something.

4. **They Disconnect**
   - Perhaps you’re looking forward to an exciting event that you can’t wait to see. The point here is that you must have something important to do now, which will allow you to shift your attention from your thoughts to your worries for the moment.

5. **They Reframe Perspectively**
   - Stress and worry are fuelled by our own skewed perception of reality. It’s easy to think that unrealistic deadlines, unloving bosses, and out-of-control traffic are the reasons we’re so stressed all the time.
   - You can’t control circumstances, but you can control how you respond to them. So before you spend too much time dwelling on something, take a minute to put the situation in perspective.

6. **They Sleep**
   - “I’ve beaten this one to death over the years, but getting enough sleep is key to keeping stress overall,” Bradberry says. "When you sleep, your brain literally erases long-term memories of the day’s stressors. This process of clearing the brain reduces anxiety, rumination, negative thinking, and stress hormone levels on its own, even without a physical rest.
   - Stressful projects often make you feel as if your thoughts are racing uncontrollably. This is great when a bear is chasing you, but not so great when you’re trying to resolve a conflict with a colleague. If things aren’t working out as you expected, take a step back and make sure you’re not overthinking things. By focusing your efforts on the present moment, you’ll be able to focus on what really matters.

7. **They Squash Negative Self-Talk**
   - A big step in managing stress involves stopping negative self-talk in its tracks. The more you ruminate on negative thoughts, the more power you give them. Most of our negative thoughts are just that—thoughts, not facts.
   - When you find yourself believing the negative voices that you keep hearing, try to stop and write them down. Literally stop, if it’s someone who’s saying such things, and ask yourself what you’re thinking. Once you’ve taken a moment to slow down the negative moments of your thoughts, you’ll experience a more positive view. When you’re looking for clarity, take a couple of minutes to focus on your breathing. Close your eyes, and just sit in a clear and breath. The goal is to spend the entire time focused only on your breathing, which will help you monitor your mind while doing the things you need to do.

8. **They Breathe**
   - This article is brought to you by Travis Bradberry, co-founder of the world’s leading provider of emotional intelligence training, tools, and software. Visit us at www.leaderonomics.com. ©2016 Leaderonomics. For more Be A Leader articles, log on to www.leaderonomics.com. Send us your feedback on Bradberry’s article?

New research from the University of California, Davis, found that people who worked daily to cultivate an attitude of purpose experienced improved mood, energy and physical well-being. It’s likely that lower levels of cortisol and the more common activation that comes with moderate levels of stress.

**Stress Severity & Duration**

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STRESS ISN’T HARMFUL AFTER ALL

By Eugene Y. J. Tee

STRESS ISN’T DISCOVERY OF STRESS

O – the somewhat unflattering comparison

adapt in ways which initially arouse discom-

altered by economic or political upheaval,

of course, but the management tale provides

continually reverts to his old habits, afraid of

get to the new cheese.

ultimately change our understanding of how

ery of stress was a rather serendipitous one.

Like many findings in science, the discov-

This story is of mice seeking cheese, and

Also in this story are two miniature

Humans do not live in mazes with cheese,

the Experience of Stress

STRESS: PRACTICAL ADVICE

Stress can obviously lead to deleterious

Distress: Stress as Poison

Why did the rats fall ill when chased

Stress can serve as a motivating drive for

Distrust: Stress as Poison

What did the rats do when chased

STRESS: AS PANACEA

They were moved on from seeing stress as a purely unpleasant, or negative, experience. Being a resilient individual is essen-

stress as eustress (i.e. literally “good stress”).

psychologists refer to these useful, adaptive

actions, giving us the buzz and enthusiasm

useful in help-

is the body’s response towards situational

experience. We’ve also (thankfully) improved

physical illnesses and complications, and

ultimately, make the rat race all the more

The ability to manage stressful demands

alarms are a little too sensitive. Much of the

psychological and health consequences – but

that only happens when our internal smoke

smoke and act upon it, or to flee to safety.

responses when the need arises.

If we have one or something, has moved their cheese

around his lab, and trying to get them out

his poor handling of the rats that resulted in

The naysayers, however, acknowledge

managing stress effectively is like fine-

gaining events you encounter that is the issue,

The rat story is a modern day parallel to our hectic, stressful

of job security. Do you work harder, or start

or something, has moved their cheese

than their peers. This is a sign of having mastered

managing stress, as highly effective leaders and practitioners of

VALUES OF STRESS

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May 15 is International Day of Families. This day presents an opportunity to promote awareness of issues relating to families, and to increase the knowledge of the social, economic, and demographic processes affecting families.

There is a significant focus on issues relating to family-environment and work-family balance to improve health outcomes for all members. Ultimately, the leaders in a family unit play a crucial role in nurturing a healthy family life.

In honour of this special day, we launched a family month campaign throughout April. The campaign was in support of the International Day of Families. This year 2016, it was a much-needed campaign for parents titled What leadership qualities have I shown to my family? What better way to lead a family than to be a role model for your children? So we wanted to know from our fellow Malaysian parents—the leadership qualities they deem important for their family. We received many entries and we felt that some of these meaningful stories needed to be shared with our readers.

As a leader, I must be able to walk the talk in the family. Responsibilities like educating family members about the importance of good behaviour and positive thinking, and being caring to everyone, is very important.

I have to self-manage and be a discipline person. As a result, planning is very important as I do not have ample resources available. I have to make sure all resources are used wisely without wastage. Planning ahead can also help to achieve whatever goals in a good and timely manner. Effective communication is key. One has to constantly listen, observe and provide feedback to family members. We need to have a comfortable environment where family members can openly communicate with each other. Always provide constructive feedback to them and encourage them to be creative in their task and problem-solving.

In addition, I can love my family members very much but I can’t spoil them. I have to let them know what their responsibilities are, and empower them to do their best with their skills, knowledge and abilities. Never take things for granted.

Keep in mind that good leaders can make mistakes too. I admit my mistakes and learn from my family members. That way, it makes me become a better leader.

By Wei Yen

Leadership: an all-encompassing term within the context of family, specifically parenting, translates into love. The one leadership quality that I have shown to my family is to be inspirational. In order to inspire my child to excel and succeed in life, I must first set the example, as I believe that a mother is the earliest and most impactful influencer in a child’s life.

My description of success will define my child’s understanding of it. Hence, I firmly believe that the motivation to be passionate and be fulfilled by what I do for a living (I teach in a university) will, in turn, ignite a spark for my child to aim for meaningful pursuit rather than materialistic wealth.

Mothers are a source of energy. As such, I do my best to be optimistic and inspire hope. Praising my children ensures that they believe in themselves and aspire towards greater heights. To be truly inspiring, a mother must “walk the talk.” I strongly believe that exemplary mothers, who lead with love, show the kids how it’s being done rather than telling kids what to do. Children then are able to model these behaviours and consequently accept responsibility for their actions.

Being inspirational also means being humble. This means I accept my weaknesses and genuinely apologise when I stumble. Ultimately, being inspirational is synonymous to being a leader, and what better leader than a mother who leads through love.

By Vijaya Sooria Sangaran Kutty

FREE LEADERSHIP WORKSHOPS

Conducted by a highly trained group of Masters in Managerial Psychology students from HELP University, in collaboration with the leadership experts from Leaderonomics, these workshops aim to help individuals gain leadership perspective.

- **Young Graduates (1 - 3 years working):** 19 May, 7 – 10pm, Wisma HELP
- **Youth (age 14 – 16):** 21 May, 9:30am – 12:30pm, Leaderonomics (Phtoel Damansara 1)
- **School Leavers (age 17 – 19):** 21 May, 2 – 5pm, Leaderonomics (Phtoel Damansara 1)
- **NGO Leaders:** 24 May, 7 – 10pm, Wisma HELP
- **College/University students:** 26 May, 7 – 10pm, Wisma HELP

Limited to **30 pax** per workshop. Admission by registration only, based on a first-come-first-serve basis. Register now to secure your spot at [http://www.leaderonomics.org/ldrworkshops](http://www.leaderonomics.org/ldrworkshops)

For inquiries, contact Tatianna at tatianna.jane@leaderonomics.com

www.leaderonomics.org
THE ULTIMATE SOLUTION TO INEFFECTIVE MEETINGS

WHAT DO THE HATS MEAN?

BLUE: THE MANAGING HAT
This is a hat to be worn by a facilitator at the beginning and end of a brainstorming session or meeting to define the purpose of a meeting, and to wrap up with the agreed plan of action.

RED: THE EMOTIONS HAT
In a team meeting, this is where everyone can talk freely about how they’re feeling, or express their thoughts on the upcoming tasks or project. Worn at the beginning, it presents an opportunity to bring up any concerns or issues. At the end, it allows people to express their feelings about what’s to come next.

WHITE: THE INFORMATION HAT
The white hat is worn to discuss the information that’s available. It’s concerned only with sharing of facts among the group.

YELLOW: THE OPTIMISM HAT
When considering proposals, this hat is worn to talk about potential benefits and positive outcomes. During debrief, it is used to reflect on what went well and why.

BLACK: THE DISCERNMENT HAT
This hat allows for practical, realistic concerns to be voiced. Is there a reason to be cautious? Should a conservative approach be taken? For reflection, the black hat looks at what went wrong and why. Unlike the red hat, evaluation adopts a logical perspective.

GREEN: THE CREATIVITY HAT
This hat comes into play when ideas are being shared. Like a brainstorming session, thoughts are offered and taken on a journey by the group to see where it might lead the project or proposals.

THE SOLUTION: MATCH YOUR HAT TO THE SITUATION/CONTEXT

THANKFULLY, a Maltese psychologist named Edward de Bono came up with a method to help individuals, groups and organisations take control of their decision-making process. Known as Six Thinking Hats, the concept allows for the different ways in which we think to be challenged, which not only encourages different perspectives, but also offers a holistic approach to problem-solving.

Often in meetings, a project or problem is viewed as a whole, and the group members will have individual tendencies when it comes to their thinking. Most of the time, we’re not stuck in one gear, but we do have a primary approach to how we deal with things. For example, you may be a detail-oriented person who likes to have all angles covered. If someone comes to you with a grand plan, you’ll be excellent at spotting potential flaws and pitfalls. You won’t get carried away with vision, but prefer to be realistic in your method in helping to achieve goals. However, being focused primarily on one perspective narrows the field of vision. What the Six Thinking Hats method does is to compel everyone to think in the same direction across a range of perspectives, which means that the decision-making process becomes structured and focused, while avoiding too much time spent on the pitfalls or getting carried away with the possibilities.

In practice, this gives sufficient time to each of the hats. There might be 10 minutes spent on sharing of information (white hat), then 10 minutes each on the possibilities (yellow hat) and potential problems (black hat), followed by sharing of creative ideas (green hat), and five minutes for people to express their feelings (red hat). The blue hat is used to define the purpose of the brainstorming or meeting session, and to conclude with plans of action.

PARTING THOUGHTS

Using this system, everyone involved in the process wears the same hat at the same time. This ensures a situation where everyone contributes and takes an active part in exploring the different perspectives, as opposed to clinging on to their own “tighter than the last clean coffee mug” approach to problem-solving.

The Six Thinking Hats method is useful because it can save a lot of time and confusion, as it presents a ready-made structure for meetings, which can sometimes be the most difficult part to put together. It also takes away the problem of big talkers hogging the limelight, since everyone is required to contribute, and by placing a limit on the time each hat is “worn,” meetings are more likely to be productive and, therefore, worthwhile.

Sandy thinks that the Six Thinking Hats approach could be very effective when properly applied. Having said that, he’s still likely to avoid meetings like the plague. To connect with Sandy, you can find him on Twitter @ RealClarke.

At Leaderonomics, we offer a course on the “Six Thinking Hats” as a quality management tool. Are you an executive or manager looking to hone your skills of decision-making, solving problems, and running effective meetings? E-mail us at training@leaderonomics.com.
The English music scene in Malaysia has enjoyed a wave of fresh talent in recent times. Arguably, one of the most talked about bands is Paperplane Pursuit. You’ve probably heard their hits, Beat of Your Love, Who’s Gonna Stop Me?! and Feel Good permeate the airwaves.

John O, lead vocalist, songwriter and producer of the band, took time out of his mad schedule and candidly shared his insights and experiences—breaking ground in the music scene here.

By LOUISA DEVADASON
editor@leaderonomics.com

“It’s vital to learn from the achievements and mistakes of others who have gone before us; however, the success or failures of others should never be the yardstick of what we believe can be achieved. I think this mindset is the only way to accomplish something that has never been done before. I’ve come to believe that limitations are excellent catalysts for creativity and innovation. I can see this in so many ways, looking back at my life so far...”

John O

What are the core differences in your mindset as a musician/artist vs a businessman/entrepreneur?

Honestly, I often approach both sides essentially in the same way—I believe creativity and innovation are as integral to business and entrepreneurial life as they are in more overtly creative areas. On both sides, I am significantly influenced by my intuition and gut feelings.

However, in my mind, this is counterbalanced with analytical and critical evaluations. For example, “Will this strategy result in significant product differentiation from everything else in the market?” “Does this sound different from every other song on-air?”

Did you create a business model/plan for starting your studio and expanding the band’s business acumen?

Our business model as it exists today has been tweaked and developed progressively as we met new challenges and opportunities. I expect that to keep happening for the foreseeable future. We’ve come to accept this as a necessary reality for operating in uncharted territory. Our aim is to become one of the most successful bands globally, making a living from selling our music and travel around the world while performing.

There has never been an artist from Asia who has succeeded in doing this (with songs in the English language), what more an independent artist. Our journey is pretty unparalleled—we have come this far with a tiny team of just the four guys in the band (including our bassist, The Chief, who has been a hidden bass member thus far). The four of us function interchangably, as the creatives in the studio and onstage; and as businessmen who strategise, market and manage ourselves and our financials. This plan was born out of necessity rather than a deliberate one created at the outset. We didn’t know any record labels, production studios, or artist managers that could help us actualise our goal of becoming a global band (not yet, at least). So we knew we would have to learn to do everything ourselves. It’s by no means the most sustainable or scalable means of operation, and we are now actively looking for the right partners to take us forward.

What investment did you make at the inception of your music career?

Aside from the obvious investment any musician has to make towards purchasing musical instruments, my largest investments have been in studio equipment. I started out small with just a simple home studio set-up, but as I progressed towards handling every step of our production (recording, mixing and mastering), the amount invested grew significantly.

How did you engage your audience/market initially?

Interestingly, right at the start, we decided that our strategy would be to start big—giving audiences the impression that we were much more established than we actually were.

The key focus of our strategy was regular radio airplay since that would place us on an equal playing field as the big international artists. That meant every song we released had to be “hit-worthy” and indistinguishable, in terms of quality, from any international hit.

Therefore, we would stand a higher chance of garnering regular radio airplay. Each song also had to be accompanied with a music video (which I directed and edited), one that didn’t give off a do-it-yourself or home-made vibe.

How did you mesh your creativity and love for various genres into one product that satisfies your own creative expression as well as the masses?

That’s something we’re still learning to do. With a new album to be released soon, it really remains to be seen if our creative output does continue to satisfy the masses (laughs).

This is probably a strange answer, but I believe a strong sense of empathy is key. As the band’s producer and primary songwriter, I spend a lot of time reading and talking to people—picking up on the themes and issues that resonate with them.

I often approach lyrics as a conversational topic with the listener. In a great conversation, you become absorbed with what the person is saying, not only when it is sincere and heartfelt, but more so if it resonates with you.

Musically, I make many writing and production decisions by approaching them as a music listener. I ask myself questions: Does this part excite me? Does the music make me feel the lyrics even more? Does this bit get boring halfway through?

In our business and creative efforts, I believe that the ability to stand in both—the shoes of the creator and the consumer—is key to our success.

What were some barriers-to-entry into the Malaysian music market?

Honestly, there are next to no barriers-to-entry into the music market anywhere in the world these days. The way we operate and produce our music is only possible because of the technological revolution that has transformed the music industry.

Conversely, there are definite barriers to success in the music market. Our strongest barrier was probably getting regular radio airplay. When the band began releasing music, local Top 40 radio stations did not play local English language music alongside hits by international artists on regular rotation. It’s great to see that things have changed for the better, and we’re extremely proud to have played a part in paving the way for that to happen.

Throughout this process, what has been a recurring theme?

In everything we do, there is a definite recurring theme of pioneering something new or charting our own course, and defying expectations along the way.

We are mindful that there is no blueprint for us to follow. That’s great because it forces us to think up new and improved ways of doing things.
Mastery: What Sets Successful People Apart from the Rest

By Crystal Cha
editor@leaderonomics.com

What comes to mind when you think of a successful person? Perhaps you may think of an entrepreneur who started with nothing but whose fortune is now worth billions. Or an athlete who won a gold medal after training for years. Or the movie star who won an Oscar after years of delivering incredible performances.

What does it take to achieve that kind of success?

**THE DABBLER**

The first type of learner is the Dabbler, who likes the idea of learning a new skill. He is always trying things out, but gets distracted easily. If his friends start trying things out, but gets disinterested. He starts training. But the moment he has to work overtime or is invited to watch a late night movie, he ditches his early morning training plans. After a while, he decides that running is not for him, and decides to learn rock climbing. The moment he rips a nail off, he decides rock climbing is too dangerous, and moves on to the next idea of learning something new.

Unless the Dabbler changes his ways, he’s never going to be good at anything.

**THE OBSESSIVE**

Then there’s the Obsessive, who, on the surface seems totally committed to her new skill. She wants to learn coding, so she signs up for a coding boot camp that costs thousands. She also buys a new and expensive laptop and 10 books on programming languages. She attends meetups with talented programmers to learn from them. The experts tell her that the best way to learn is through lots of practice, by starting with her own small projects and building from there. But she doesn’t want to start small—she wants to see results. She thinks, “If I can just find a better mentor, read the right book, or put in more hours, then I could win a hackathon in two months’ time.”

Of course, that’s never going to happen, because her expectations are unrealistic. She is unwilling to accept that learning takes time. Working harder or spending more money in her pursuit will just lead to disappointment and possible burnout.

**THE HACKER**

Then there is the Hacker, who believes in the mantra “Fake it till you make it.” He skips building a strong foundation and always looks for shortcuts. At first, he may progress up the ladder at a fast pace. He learns how to navigate office politics, win the favour of superiors, and use others to get work done for him. He may get the first few promotions he is after, but eventually hits a ceiling in his learning.

As a middle manager, he may be able to use his title and authority to get his juniors to do things. But he is unable to progress to senior management because he lacks the vision and integrity needed to not only manage a few people, but to lead and inspire an entire organisation. He may be good at hitting deadlines, but not at navigating tough economic climates and ensuring the company stays profitable.

**THE MASTER**

Finally, there is the Master—the rarest learner of all—who never stops putting in consistent hours, never stops learning, and never stops improving. For the Master, her reward is not in mastering a skill, but in the journey of getting there.

On days that she achieves success, she is thankful, but doesn’t let it get to her head. Her focus is not on past successes but on the journey ahead. On days that she fails, she is still motivated, because failure has taught her something new.

She lives for the early morning sunrises that greet her each time she gets out of bed and laces up her shoes for a run. She lives for the quiet nights checking and rechecking the figures she’s about to submit after everyone else has gone home. She lives for one more day of practice, one more day of getting better.

She enjoys her craft so much, she often loses track of time when she practices. And one day, after hours, days, and years of practice, she looks back and realises she has blazed a trail to become a leader in her field.

PARTING THOUGHTS

If you want to be successful, not just for a moment, but for a lifetime, you might want to spend some time reflecting on what you need to do differently to become a Master.

Crystal Cha is currently a freelance writer and content marketing consultant who helps companies strengthen their brand through creative communications and thought leadership. In her previous job in the corporate sector, she led a marketing team, set up an internship program for the company, and mentored over 30 interns during her time there. Besides marketing, she is passionate about helping young people start their careers on the right foot.

THE KEY TO SUCCESS

If you look at the lives of successful people, one thing they all have in common is commitment. No matter how naturally talented a person may be, it would be impossible for him to become a master at his craft without commitment and the willingness to learn.

Is it possible for you and me to achieve success in our goals? Yes, if we can understand and achieve the level of commitment that masters have to their craft. You might not be aiming for world recognition, but I’m sure there are goals you want to achieve that require a level of mastery. It could be completing a marathon, getting a pay raise, or winning a scholarship.

But first, it’s important to understand the kind of learners we don’t want to become.

In his book, Mastery: The Keys to Success and Long-Term Fulfillment, George Leonard explains that when it comes to learning new skills, there are four types of learners: the Dabbler, the Obsessive, the Hacker, and finally, the Master.

For the Dabbler, the Obsessive, the Hacker, and finally, the Master, the key to success is commitment. Without it, there is no Fulfilment, George Leonard explains in his book, Mastery: The Keys to Success and Long-Term Fulfillment.

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**5 QUESTIONS THAT HELP YOU AVOID FINANCIAL STRESS**

By AARON TANG

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You and I make financial decisions every day. Tough ones.

But most of us don’t think logically about how we spend our money. Until the credit card statement comes of course, then, we panic.

It’s no surprise then—that money remains the biggest source of stress for most people.

What could be more stressful than worrying if you’ll have enough to eat tomorrow? Or how you’re going to pay your overdue rent?

I hope you and I are never in that position.

But for most of us non-poverty-line people—learning to live below our means would remove a lot of stress from our lives.

1. **CAN I AFFORD IT?**

   If I need to borrow money to do it— I probably can’t afford it.

   These are exceptions of course. Some people would argue that education and housing loans are necessary. But even then, I would think long and hard before signing up for long-term debt.

   As much as possible, I will only commit to things that are necessary. But even then, I would think long and hard before signing up for long-term debt.

   Having a budget helps with that.

   From a purely selfish perspective—is this really going to make me happy? And for how long?

   A lot of people enjoy experiences more than material things. If you’re one of them—going on a trip to see the Aurora Borealis would probably make you happier than buying a Rolex.

   I’m one of those people who likes stuff more. But I’ve learnt that giving gifts to my loved ones and people in need makes me even happier. It’s long-term happiness too.

2. **IS IT THE BEST USE OF MY MONEY?**

   So I just received a US$10,000 performance bonus. Should I buy myself a nice watch or go for a vacation?

   It depends on my financial priorities. Have I paid off all my commitments? Do I have six months expenses in my emergency fund? Have I invested in good educational books this month?

   For example, if I still have US$20,000 in high-interest credit card debt, I immediately know that’s where my bonus should go.

   But most of us have limited amounts of money to play with—it’s important to prioritise.

   Having a budget helps with that.

3. **WILL IT REALLY MAKE ME HAPPIER?**

   From a purely selfish perspective—is this really going to make me happy? And for how long?

   A lot of people enjoy experiences more than material things. If you’re one of them—going on a trip to see the Aurora Borealis would probably make you happier than buying a Rolex.

   I’m one of those people who likes stuff more. But I’ve learnt that giving gifts to my loved ones and people in need makes me even happier. It’s long-term happiness too.

   But if it’s something that just feels good right now, but is ultimately meaningless—I try to stay away.

4. **WILL IT BETTER MY LOVED ONES’ LIVES?**

   Now that I’ve convinced myself that it’ll make me happy—how does it affect the lives of my loved ones?

   Because if you have a family, your financial decisions affect their lives too.

   If I buy a three-storey mansion, the kids will have a lot more space to play in. But will the additional debt require me to work harder and spend less time with them?

   And how about my wife? Let’s say she’s the one pushing for the mansion—would she be better off if I just agreed, or if I helped her see the burden that comes with a huge house?

5. **WHY DO I WANT IT?**

   Perhaps the most important question of all is why. Why do I really want to make that purchase? What’s my most basic desire behind it?

   If I buy a big house—is it because I want a home with lots of love, or is it because I feel small if I don’t own big things?

   If I buy a Ferrari—is it because I really need to travel quickly, or is it because I’m feeling stuck in my own life?

   Looking at my motives not only helps me realise how ridiculous some of my wants are. It also helps me understand what I’m really missing in my life.

   Things that money can’t buy. But things that I need to start working on.

**PARTING THOUGHTS**

In our quest for happiness, ironically these might seem like really stressful, fun-killing questions to ask. After all, who doesn’t enjoy the feeling of throwing caution to the wind and spending money like it doesn’t matter?

But hopefully if you worry about these questions first, they’ll put you on the path to financial security—the path where you eventually don’t have to worry about money anymore.

The path of freedom.

Aaron is the Campus and Digital Marketing Lead at Leaderonomics. He is also the founder of mr-stingy.com, where he writes about optimising time, money and relationships. This article was first published in the Huffington Post.