



GIVING YOUR BEST SHOT IN GOLF AND THE WORKPLACE

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SEEING the junior golfers hike up the 18th green wearily but with big grins plastered on their faces sure does bring back some fond memories of having been exactly in their shoes.

While volunteering for MYFutures Junior Tour last April, I had the chance to reflect on how the game of golf has helped me become an athlete in the workforce. The 14-year-old me certainly did not foresee the positive impact this game would have on my career.

The game of golf is fast becoming the pastime of many, regardless of age. It is a game that can be so difficult and frustrating.

However, it only takes a single great shot to make all the hours of adversity worthwhile. This, along with the innate desire for self-improvement, is what draws golfers back to the course week in, week out.

It is very much like leadership; zealous leaders never let hardship get in the way. Instead, they persevere, make the necessary changes and deliver amazing results.

1 HAVE YOUR WEIGHT ON THE BALLS OF YOUR FEET

Growing up, I have taken golf lessons, and over the years I have had my fair share of having been asked to modify my swing or even to redo my swing completely when needed.

One of the key lessons that stuck was to have my weight on the balls of my feet rather than to have my full weight on my heels. This may seem simplistic to some, but in golf, this ensures that my alignment and foundation is strong through my follow-through swing.

In leading a team, this is crucial as well. By having a strong but flexible foundation, one will always be ready to respond in any given workplace situation because they would already have that ready-to-

respond mindset from the get-go.

Rather than dwell on the uncertainties, that strong foundation would give the flexibility to take any necessary action without it affecting the entire organisation negatively.

2 GRIP IT AND RIP IT

With the game of golf, you must be courageous to take occasional risks. This is where the athletes will say, "go big or go home."

Initially, I would always play the safe shots, i.e. to place the ball nicely in the centre of the fairway. As I began striking the ball better and further, my father started advising me to take a calculated risk in attacking the pin (the pin refers to the hole with the flag in it). Safe shots got me average scores but calculated-risk shots got me medal-worthy scores.

In leadership, it is the same. Sporadically, we would have to take some risks and go big. When the opportunities to take risks present itself, we should learn to just grip and rip it rather than to just lay up a shot in hopes of playing it safe.

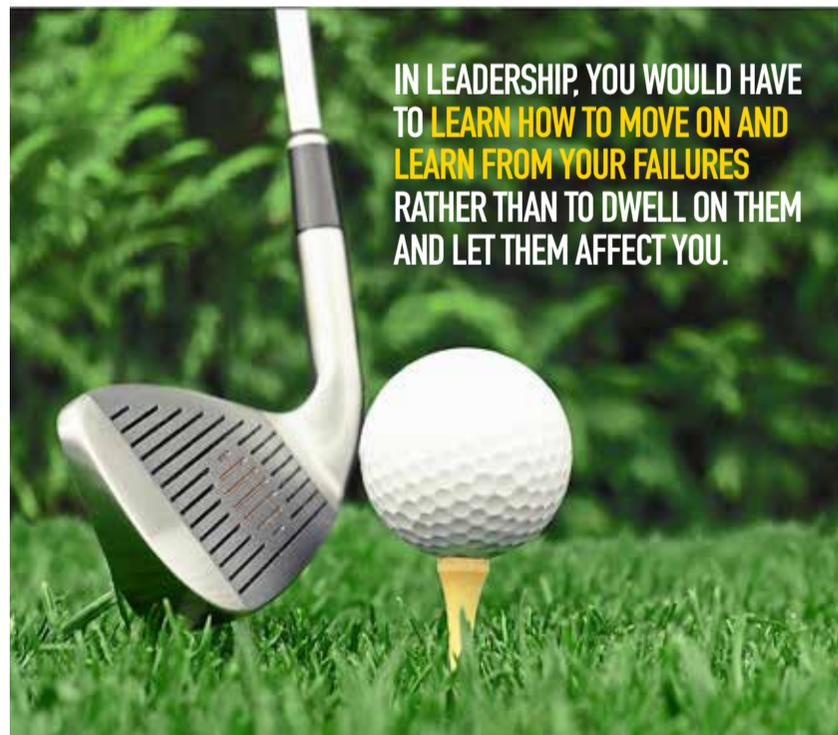
I have been presented with many such opportunities by my boss. I had my doubts in taking them up at first as I felt that I needed more years under my belt to take those tasks on. But he got me thinking of how that, in itself, was a self-limiting belief.

I should be changing my mindset to seeing a challenge as an opportunity for growth rather than to fear failure. That is what pushes me out of my comfort zone.

This type of mindset and attitude should be encouraged and adopted by all employees so that they will be able to learn of their full potential and to challenge themselves continuously.

3 EVERY SHOT COUNTS

On average, a round of golf takes about four hours to complete, and the actual time taken to complete a round may vary for many reasons. On some days, the ball bounces favourably onto



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the green and on other days it bounces into the hazard zone.

This happens often on the golf course but how you respond to it with your following shots is what makes the difference. In golf, it would mean having to forgo your bad shots without getting disheartened for the rest of the game.

In leadership, you would have to learn how to move on and learn from your failures rather than to dwell on them and let them affect you. You may have done horribly on day one but with a spectacular or even decent round on day two.

Like a game of golf, leadership is unpredictable. That is how life is and that gives us a chance to bounce back favourably onto our initial paths.

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

There are many parallels between golf and leadership. No golfer will ever say that it is an easy sport to master.

There will be days where the terrains are unforgivable and the weather is just impossible.

Comparable with leadership, we would be facing unreasonable client expectations, long working hours and even erratic economic challenges. As leaders, we must learn to push through these adversities and to learn from our mistakes in order to drive results.

With Leaderonomics Youth, our programmes aim at meeting the youths where they are, and to develop them to be successful adults.

With Leaderonomics Club, we strive to instil the importance of character development in our youths while putting these lessons into actionable and measurable practice through their M.A.D. (Making A Difference) projects.

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■ *Stephanie Ling is the Club Programme Lead at Leaderonomics Youth. Playing of a handicap of 15, she strives to use her experience as a state athlete to empower other youths to realise their full potential in all aspects of their lives. The professional life may not have been for her, but she feels the lessons and experiences gained will help her do better at the workplace.*