PERFORMING UNDER PRESSURE

FOUR STEPS TO A STRONGER MIND

BEWARE OF DISTANT ELEPHANTS

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MANIPULATIVE QUESTIONS
RESULT IN RESISTANCE, NOT INSPRIATION.
HELPING PEOPLE CRAFT THEIR PATH FORWARD
EXPRESSES ALIGNMENT WITH THEIR PASSIONS,
BELIEF IN THEIR ABILITIES, AND EXPECTATION
FOR THEIR SUCCESS.

WHAT MUST BE IN PLACE FOR LEADERS TO
IGNITE AND FUEL INSPIRATION IN OTHERS?
WHAT QUESTIONS HELP PEOPLE FIND THEIR INSPIRATION?

Dan Rockwell is a coach, speaker and is freakishly interested in leadership. He is an author of a world-renowned most socially shared leadership blog, Leadership Freak.

“IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO BE BUSY. SO ARE THE ANTS.
THE QUESTION IS: WHAT ARE WE BUSY ABOUT?”
— Henry David Thoreau

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WHAT DRIVES ENTREPRENEURS AND THEIR BUSINESS?

By PRETHIBA ESVARY
editor@leaderonomics.com

Do you ever wonder where entrepreneurs or start-up founders get all their energy and motivation from? If you have spoken to some of them, you would have noticed a string of commonalities.

Leaderonomics had the opportunity to speak to five Malaysian start-up founders on how passion and purpose play a pivotal role in the journey to grow their businesses.

These founders are among the 20 finalists of the Alliance Bank SME Innovation Challenge 2016, which recognises the running to bring their business to the next level.

Grub Cycle

Three years in an oil and gas firm and a short stint in an angel investment company later, Grub Cycle co-founder, Redza Shahid decided to start his own social enterprise. Redza was fuelled with a burning passion to provide everyone – regardless of their income – with the same opportunities. Combined that with a goal to build a sustainable environment, Redza and the other co-founders decided to provide food and beverage businesses a platform to sell surplus food to the community at a bargain price.

Part of the values that Grub Cycle has is to be an active change in the community, hence this is why part of the business’ proceeds are used to subsidise the cost of basic food necessities for lower income families.

With regard to sharing his passion with stakeholders, he said: “It’s about having regular chats about the purpose of the company and ensuring transparency in all that we do.”

When the going gets tough, he assured that having the right people around him helps to keep him grounded.

Shaped

The idea of body shaping and body slimming is not uncommon among women.

What’s interesting to note is that products that aim to shape the body can be incredibly expensive and may bring about negative consequences to the wearer such as discomfort, pain, and other health implications.

Well aware of this, Eau Eau and her husband, Fion Tan started Shape, a company that aims to help women of all shapes and sizes to look good and feel confident through affordable shapewear and maternity lingerie.

Through the collaboration of customers, back, they sought to address pain points experienced by customers, and from there developed a product that is so comfortable that it can be worn for five to eight hours. It literally feels like second skin!

Eau’s passion lies in running a business, says that while starting a business is not easy especially in the early phase, staying true to one’s purpose is crucial.

When asked how he sustains his passion, he responded by saying that the feedback given by customers is what motivates not only him but the entire company to continue doing what they do and to strive to do better.

He said, “Even though I’m the founder, I maintain a good relationship with my employees and customers, to understand their needs and pain points, and to improve from there.”

Amazin’ Graze

Amy Cheng (pic) and Ching Yi Lee met in Kuala Lumpur, and discovered that they had a simple quirk – a difficulty in finding local healthy snacks that are tasty, good-for-you, and inexpensive. Together with Sabrina Hove, they formed Amazin’ Graze, a healthy snack company that produces affordable all-natural snacks that caters to the local palate.

Despite being a relatively young start-up, everyone in the team is multi-functional and is always ready to roll up their sleeves to accomplish the tasks at hand.

The founders believe in inspiring each employee with a greater social mission to improve community health while giving them room for personal growth. That way, it ensures that the employees are equally passionate about what they do.

They constantly align themselves with the company’s purpose by seeing through the team’s personal growth. Besides that, they always keep in mind the core values of the company and what their healthy snacks stand for.

Cheng said, “Yes, making money is a measure of success. But what drives us all is seeing our team care for each other, grow, and passing on that passion to others.”

Supermodel’s Secrets

A former model, Michelle Chua was at the crossroads of her life when her right eye went blind and she was unable to find a job. She ventured into modelling and learnt the secrets of looking good using only a few beauty enhancements without breaking the bank.

It was a challenge being a model as Chua had to purchase many types of beauty products. Sadly, most of these products were either really expensive or hard to find. She spent a lot of time studying them and had a lightbulb moment: why not share the knowledge with everyone else who want to look good, the natural way?

And that’s how Supermodel’s Secrets came about. It is an online store that sells beauty products for women and men with an aim to enable everyone to look good and feel confident affordably without surgery.

Chua’s passion for beauty products is evident from the fact that she sources and tests products on herself to see if they actually work, before releasing them to the market.

She confessed that while her competitors may have the ability to take an idea/product from her, they are unable to take her passion and drive away.

IN A NUTSHELL

Everyone has the ability to come up with an idea, but the bigger picture (purpose) is important to drive you forward.

LocalUsher

Sabrina Cheng (pic right) and Hui Lin Ng are electrical engineers who quit their jobs in Singapore to pursue their passion in travelling via LocalUsher.

What started as a platform for locals to usher travellers around in Malaysia soon turned into an online lifestyle platform for urbanites who are bored with their existing leisure-time options to discover and book unique experiences and/or fun things to do around them.

Cheng and Ng are purpose-driven individuals, with an aim to get LocalUsher to be the go-to website for people when they think of weekend activities and retreats.

“As an entrepreneur, fulfilling your dreams is important but money should still be considered an important factor as well,” Cheng said, when asked how purpose is sustained despite challenges.

“Most entrepreneurs do not draw a salary for the first few years, so it is important that you are able to sustain yourself and meet all your financial commitments.”

By constantly reminding each other about the company’s purpose, the duo agree that it is easy to get distracted with administration tasks, people matters, new projects and competition.

It is a challenge to find the balance between striving for profits and working towards a purpose, but they advised that while profits bring in investors, purpose leads to a sustainable business.

Secrets

With regard to sharing his passion with stakeholders, he said: “It’s about having regular chats about the purpose of the company and ensuring transparency in all that we do.”

When the going gets tough, he assured that having the right people around him helps to keep him grounded.

Supermodel’s Secrets

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To ensure that her fellow entrepreneur has their own passion, she conducts one-on-one sessions with each of them, so they have a full grasp of her background and the vision of the company.

She said, “You need profit in order to fulfil your purpose… but the bigger picture (purpose) is important to drive you forward.”

The SME Innovation Challenge conducted annually is one of the many initiatives undertaken by the Alliance Bank BizSmart Academy to spur the growth of high-potential SMEs. For more information, visit www.bizsmart.com.my.

Log on to www.leaderonomics.com to watch videos of these inspiring finalists share their inspirational stories.

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WHY SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE DON'T CRUMBLE UNDER PRESSURE

By AMY MORIN
editor@leaderonomics.com

HOW did Kobe Bryant score 81 points in a single basketball game? How did Rory McIlroy bounce back from choking at the 2013 Masters to win the US Open shortly after? Martin Turner, a lecturer at Staffordshire University in the School of Psychology, Sport, and Exercise, says it's all about their mental game.

I had a chance to connect with Turner to talk about the psychological skills top performing athletes use to enhance their performance.

Turner, who is an expert in human performance under pressure, says business leaders can gain a competitive edge by using the same skills top athletes use to thrive under pressure. He's written a book with fellow psychologist Jamie Barker titled, What Business Can Learn from Sport Psychology: Ten Lessons for Peak Professional Performance.

He's agreed to share some of his insights about why some people perform well under pressure while others simply crumble.

IT'S A MENTAL GAME

What separates good athletes from extraordinary athletes is often their ability to perform in high-pressure situations. The best skills in the world aren't valuable if athletes can't perform when it matters most – in competition. Two people with very similar skills and training can perform drastically different when faced with high-pressure situations. "The key difference between those who get the gold medal and those who don't is not between the ears," says Turner.

Turner has taken the knowledge he's gained from studying athletes' performance and figured out how business leaders can apply similar skills to high-pressure situations. Whether it's meeting with a high-profile client, or responding to a media interview, Turner says, "Business leaders can learn to develop robust psychological skills to help them fulfill their potential under pressure, and importantly, help others around them fulfill their potential."

In both sports and business, people who are able to use their mind as a valuable weapon beat out the competition when performing under pressure.

PERFORMING IN HIGH-PRESSURE SITUATIONS

Ever wondered why some people thrive under pressure while other people seem to crumble? Turner says it's all in the way we initially respond to stress. The initial response to stress occurs unconsciously and automatically based on our initial rapid evaluation of the situation. Some people are able to respond in a manner that helps their performance, known as a challenge state. But, other people enter into a threat state, which hinders their performance.

When faced with a stressful situation, we experience a physiological response – sweaty palms, muscle tension, dry mouth, nausea, and an increased heart rate. "The human stress response is a wonderful feat of evolution, which is triggered automatically at the first sign of danger," explains Turner.

While our ancestors faced dangers – like hungry lions – today's dangers are more psychological, like public speaking. Despite the changes in the types of danger we face today, our fear is still triggered by comparatively minor stressors as if we were facing life or death challenges.

Turner explains, "A challenge state reflects a positive mental approach to pressure situations where our mental resources meet the demands of the situation. We endure physiological changes – like an increased heart rate and decreased blood vessel constriction – that allow blood to be delivered to the brain efficiently. This helps us concentrate, make decisions, and have control over our thoughts and emotions. Those who don't enter into the challenge state, enter into a threat state. During the threat state, the heart rate increases like in the challenge state. But this time, the blood vessels constrict, which means the blood pumped from the heart remains largely unchanged. As a result, the delivery of glucose and oxygen to the brain – which is essential to peak performance – is inefficient and our ability to focus and make decisions is hindered."

CRUMBLING UNDER PRESSURE

If you think back to times when you haven't been successful, you may recall that you likely felt worried and uncertain prior to your performance. The fear of failure, or concern about making a bad decision, can cause us to overthink a situation. Entering into a stressful situation with a positive mental approach leads to a challenge state. But, if you approach a tough situation with negativity, you're more likely to enter into a threat state.

The "white bear" experiment by Professor Daniel M. Wegener indicates that the more you tell yourself not to think about something, the more likely you are to do/think about it. Professor Sian Beilock, and the author of Choke, has coined this as "paralysis by analysis." Overthinking can destroy our ability to perform at our full potential. In fact, overthinking while under pressure can cause us to fail when performing tasks that we'd normally consider to be relatively easy.

When you enter into a high-pressure situation, it's important that you're able to focus on the task. If you're so busy worrying about how you're going to perform, you'll waste essential brain power.

Ironically, one of the ways most of us try to approach stressful situations is by telling ourselves, "Don't mess up," or "Don't fail." However, saying, "Don't fail," actually increases the chances that you'll fail.

A vast amount of research shows that telling yourself not to do something actually – and ironically – increases the likelihood of doing it," says Turner.

"Therefore, your ability to focus on aspects that will help you perform is impaired and your ability to focus on aspects that will lead to failure is enhanced," warns Turner. "When you're experiencing anxiety about the pressure you're under, you're more likely to think in acts that are directly opposed to your goals."

IN A NUTSHELL

Clearly, it takes some extra effort to get our body into the right state so we can perform optimally. "How the body reacts under pressure is dictated by the mind," explains Turner. Entering into a stressful situation with a positive mental approach leads to a challenge state. But, if you approach a tough situation with negativity, you're more likely to enter into a threat state.

Successful people are able to thrive because they enter into high-pressure situations in a challenge state. The good news is, we all have the ability to do this.
MENTAL toughness, perseverance, grit, resolve, and tenacity are just a few of the words that get bandied around when we talk about what makes someone a great athlete, an outstanding leader or a successful business person. People often equate success with talent. So why do these “natural” lucky winners get to conquer all on the world stage, end up being nobody?

Numerous studies are showing that in education, work, sport and your personal health, that your mental toughness determines your success. In other words, you can possess all the talent in the world, but it won’t help unless you have mental toughness, perseverance, and grit to succeed.

The good news is that mental toughness can be developed at any stage in life. In life, business and sport we spend numerous hours learning skills so that we work at our best, but we fail to pre-empt or teach any of the necessary psychological skills needed to be mentally prepared for the pressure situations that occur day in, day out. Not being mentally prepared undermines physical capabilities and compromises performance. These performance problems can stem from a range of conditions including nervousness, pressure to perform or even dealing with the business of always being switched on.

So how do we learn these mental toughness skills?

The answer lies in developing a tough mindset by following the four steps below, and in doing so, allow you to be prepared for any eventuality.

1. YOUR WHY DRIVE THE PURPOSE? CLARITY IS WHAT CREATES MOTIVATION

Your WHY gives you passion for starting. If you have a strong WHY, your decision-making and the choices you make will be more robust. Elon Musk made millions from the sale of his Internet company PayPal. Many expected him to create another Internet company from the money he received. But Musk’s dreams lay elsewhere; he wanted to fly intergalactically and produce futuristic cars. Musk took his earnings and invested them in two of his own highly innovative start-ups, SpaceX and Tesla. Initially, these two ventures nearly went bankrupt, but that didn’t stop Musk and today, SpaceX and Tesla thrive.

For optimum motivation, and to create resolve, it is important to have a narrow focus.

For athletes, your WHY might be:...
- Wanting a gold medal at the Olympics
- Breaking a record
- Or just being the fittest you can be

In business, the WHY may include:...
- Securing greater market share
- Propelling your team to higher productivity
- Knowing your WHY will supply the motivation for you to implement the next stage.

2. PREPARATION: CREATING THE FOUNDATION FOR TOUGHNESS

“The general who wins the battle makes many calculations in his temple before the battle is fought. The general who loses makes but few calculations beforehand.” — Sun Tzu

Mental toughness is fostered by knowing that you are prepared efficiently and that you are totally competent to handle any problems that arise out of the blue. Excellent preparation helps you to avoid “surprises,” and will better prepare you to know “how” to control those that do. Mentally tough people are successful because they are willing to do more than what the average person does.

NBA superstar Kobe Bryant has always been relentless with his practice and study of the game. His preparations have set him apart, he often practised much longer and sacrificed so much more than the average player, and it is these traits that have made him one of the legends of the game. His preparation gave him the confidence to know that he had done the work to score the much-needed goal when the pressure was on!

For athletes, excellent preparation would mean:...
- Doing the work needed so there is no doubt you are physically prepared
- Knowing how to handle the distractions, such as anxiety or self-doubt so they don’t take a hold
- Having plans for any unexpected distractions that may occur

In business, this could mean...
- Having a plan, but also a backup plan
- Being self-aware of your bad points, and aware of how you can prevent them from rearing their ugly head
- Strategies for coping with any unforeseen crisis that may occur

The application of your preparations will then allow you to create awareness and track the next strategy, which is:

3. EFFORT: HELPING YOU TO BUILD THE TOUGHNESS WALLS

Opportunities to improve only come if you put in the effort. Those with mental toughness know that effort is required in all they do. They take the time to learn and make themselves better. They are aware that results don’t occur overnight but take many years to achieve, and require persistent effort. They are both disciplined and motivated, tracking results to determine progress in both the short and long term. They are wise when it comes to distractions; knowing when to avoid them if they could be considered a time waster or could inhibit their development. Yet, know when to embrace it, if it supports or enhances their motivation, focus or ability. Developing and applying their toughness as a shield against threats leads to success.

Finally, we move to the last step:

4. ATTITUDE WHICH ENABLES THE TRANSFORMATION

Mental toughness is built by accepting challenges and greeting them with an open mind, and not seeing them as an issue. Mentally tough people see this as an opportunity to get better at what they do and understand that nothing should be taken for granted.

A positive mindset undoubtedly will hold you in good stead when things get hard and help you deal with any obstacles that crop up. Being positive also contributes to quick recoveries and allows you to prosper from the bad breaks or failures.

Bridal designer Vera Wang might not have achieved her present success if she had made the 1968 Olympic figure skating team. It was after her Olympic dreams failed that she went into fashion, initially working as an office assistant before moving up to senior fashion editor at Vogue. Being passed over for the editor-in-chief position, Wang, decided to leave Vogue and took up a position of design director at Ralph Lauren. But it was her failure to find a suitable wedding gown that led her to create her own bridal gown and in doing so, set her on the path to her own label, which has now become the most recognised bridal brand in the world. Wang is a real example of learning and excelling from failure.

Just remember to be patient, mental toughness takes time to develop. It is built by creating habits and forming goals based on your WHY. Being mentally tough isn’t part of being talented or intelligent but is forged by being adequately prepared, applying effort and consistency to all your actions.

Mentally tough people know that their attitude will provide an immunity against the many obstacles that life throws at them and by learning from failures, both reinforces and produces appropriate future practices to foster success. It is these four steps, when consistently applied, which will transform a soft mindset into a tough mindset, and propel you onto greater success.

Good luck with your journey!
TIP NO. 1: BUILD PERSEVERANCE THROUGH PRACTICE

Tribal skills are a muscle for stress tolerance; it can be strengthened through practice. According to Duckworth, grit is a combination of perseverance and passion for long-term goals. A tip for building grit is to set clearly defined short-term goals and reflect on your progress. By focusing on small victories, you can build momentum and maintain your motivation. If you find yourself getting frustrated, take a break and return to the task with renewed energy. Remember, the goal is not to be perfect, but to keep trying and improving. When you experience setbacks, use them as opportunities to learn and grow. By persevering through challenges, you will strengthen your ability to withstand future difficulties.

TIP NO. 2: MANAGE YOUR TIME AND RESOURCES

Tired of feeling overwhelmed and stressed? Try managing your time and resources more effectively. First, prioritize your tasks by importance and urgency. Focus on completing the most important tasks first. Next, create a schedule that allows you to allocate time for breaks and self-care. Avoid multitasking as it reduces your productivity and increases stress. Instead, focus on one task at a time, giving it your undivided attention. Finally, remember to delegate when possible and say “no” to requests that do not align with your priorities. By managing your time and resources wisely, you can reduce stress and increase your overall productivity.

TIP NO. 3: CLARIFY YOUR LOW-LEVEL GOALS

Note down the Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound (SMART) goals you need to achieve. By defining your goals clearly, you can create a roadmap for success and stay focused on your objectives. Remember to make your goals SMART: Specific (clearly defined), Measurable (quantifiable), Achievable (attainable), Relevant (connected to your overall goals) and Time-bound (set deadlines). This will help you track your progress and stay motivated. Additionally, sharing your goals with others can provide accountability and support.

TIP NO. 4: FOCUS ON CHANGE

This is a critical step in your journey. Focus on the change you want to make in your life and set clear, achievable goals. By focusing on change, you can overcome obstacles and achieve your goals. Additionally, adopting a growth mindset can help you embrace change and view it as an opportunity for growth. Remember, change is not always easy, but it is necessary for personal and professional growth.

TIP NO. 5: MANAGE YOUR THOUGHTS AND MINDSET

Thoughts are powerful; they can either help or hinder you. Manage your thoughts by practicing mindfulness and self-compassion. Acknowledge negative thoughts as they arise, but do not get caught up in them. Instead, focus on positive affirmations and visualization. For example, visualize yourself successfully completing a task or achieving a goal. By managing your thoughts, you can cultivate a positive mindset and increase your resilience.

TIP NO. 6: LEARN FROM SUCCESSFUL LEADERS

Successful leaders are aware of their strengths and weaknesses. Barlow and his colleagues have underlined some of the ways you can learn from them. For instance, by analyzing their decision-making processes and the challenges they faced, you can gain valuable insights. Additionally, successful leaders are open to feedback and continuously seek ways to improve. By learning from others, you can develop your own unique leadership style and increase your effectiveness.
By KEVIN KRUSE
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Do you have trouble saying no? Do you ever look at your ridiculous day calendar and wonder, “Why in the world did I agree to all this?”

The more responsibilities we gain in life, the shorter the days, months and years get. There simply isn’t enough time to get everything done anymore. And yet, the requests on our time continue. There’s no possible way we can say yes to everything; yet, there are still times when we find it so hard to turn someone down.

There are many reasons for that, including:

• We’re afraid to make people mad.
• We’re afraid to hurt someone’s feelings.
• We want to be liked.
• We don’t want to be rude; we were raised to be polite.
• We underestimate how much time it will really take.
• We’re not clear on our own priorities.
• We feel good by being helpful.
• We like earning future return favours.

Indeed, we are raised and socialised to want to help others in need. We value helping others. But before you say yes, remember: The future you will be just as busy as the present you. If not more.

Uncontrolled “yes” responses to requests for time will quickly block out all the other things we value – including the very things that have gotten us this far in the first place.

BEWARE OF DISTANT ELEPHANTS

They say that in the distance, even giant elephants at first look small. Simple projects seem to grow in size. When we find it so hard to turn someone down, it’s not that you should say no to everything, but you have to identify what your priorities are, and remember that just because your calendar is empty now, doesn’t mean it will be when the time comes.

It’s not that you should going to really be a lot less busy than the present! I was looking forward to it. I accepted the invitation. That was my second yes.

As the date got closer, another student asked me if she could interview me for the college radio station; I would just need to arrive a couple of hours earlier. Then a professor asked if I wouldn’t mind speaking to his economics class about business and ethics, just a little earlier in the day. Yes and yes.

As time ticked away and the pro bono event at the college got closer and closer, more and more things came up. My daughter’s school play got scheduled for the same day. I would have to miss it. I was asked to do a corporate keynote event on the same day – for my full fee; I had to turn it down. A TV news programme in Australia wanted to do a live interview with me on the same day via satellite, but I was already booked.

It was a bummer missing out on all those other things (especially my kid’s play), but I don’t regret my original decision or the string of yeses that followed. Still, I share this story as an example of how we mistakenly think we’ll be less busy in the future than we are in the present.

WHEN YES MEANS NO

It’s easy to accept a lunch date when you look at your calendar three weeks from now and see that you have no meetings or other lunch plans that day. You have to realise: Whatever obligations and projects and tasks you have now, you’ll also have in a month, six months, or a year.

Unless you make a radical change in your life, your children will continue to get sick, play sports, and require parent-teacher conferences; your boss will still be giving you projects, your car will still need oil changes and inspections; your friends will still be throwing parties.

It’s not that you should say no to everything, but you have to identify what your priorities are, and remember that just because your calendar is empty now, doesn’t mean it will be when the time comes. And also remember, even simple projects seem to grow in size. Even distant elephants look small from far away.
ENGAGEMENT HABITS OF EFFECTIVE MANAGERS

By NINA TI
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There is no such thing as an all-rounded person. But there is such a thing as an all-rounded team. Therefore, one of the most demanding responsibilities for a manager is to create the right fit between individual strengths and work opportunities.

Engagement habit No. 3: Identifying your team’s strengths

My manager goes a step further by delegating work based on a transparent distribution system whereby every member of the team can clearly see the workload of their other team members. Sometimes the task will play directly to their strengths, sometimes it will not. When it does not, the delegation is meant as a dynamic exercise to tease out hidden talents that she feels the member has, or as a safe space to allow the team member to test his or her limits.

Engagement habit No. 4: Demonstrating care

A study done by Gallup reported: “A disproportionate number of workers who view their employer as unfair and uncar- ing” will cheat when they think they can get away with it. Effective managers know that forming personal connections is essential – an easy way to do this is to get in the habit of having sincere greetings and conversations that are non-work related. Although it may seem uncomfortable at times, when managers deliver the truth, it shows that they care about their team members.

Engagement habit No. 5: Recognising your team’s successes frequently

Many wonder how often people should be praised – good rule of thumb is about once a week. If this seems too often, consider why frequent praise is so important. Praise received is a positive motivating force for repeat behaviour. Silence from a manager is usually interpreted in a negative way. Studies have shown that employees who do not feel adequately recognised are twice as likely to say they will leave their company in the next year. Recognition is a habit, and it’s good practice to praise and recognise good work at least once a week.

Silent treatment does not work – reinforcing the affirmations that the team is doing a good job is showing your engagement, don’t only talk to them when things go wrong.

Engagement habit No. 2: Providing access to resources

The support of the manager is imperative when making sure that there are adequate resources so employees are not “handicapped” when he/she wants to act. If there are mountains that the manager cannot climb in order to provide resources, sometimes due to budget constraints or purchasing cutbacks, there are still a number of ways to maintain morale within the team.

My manager avoids cutting into the support of the manager is imperative when making sure that there are adequate resources so employees are not “handicapped” when he/she wants to act. If there are mountains that the manager cannot climb in order to provide resources, sometimes due to budget constraints or purchasing cutbacks, there are still a number of ways to maintain morale within the team.

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My manager goes a step further by delegating work based on a transparent distribution system whereby every member of the team can clearly see the workload of their other team members. Sometimes the task will play directly to their strengths, sometimes it will not. When it does not, the delegation is meant as a dynamic exercise to tease out hidden talents that she feels the member has, or as a safe space to allow the team member to test his or her limits.

Engagement habit No. 4: Demonstrating care

A study done by Gallup reported: “A disproportionate number of workers who view their employer as unfair and uncar- ing” will cheat when they think they can get away with it. Effective managers know that forming personal connections is essential – an easy way to do this is to get in the habit of having sincere greetings and conversations that are non-work related. Although it may seem uncomfortable at times, when managers deliver the truth, it shows that they care about their team members.

Engagement habit No. 5: Recognising your team’s successes frequently

Many wonder how often people should be praised – good rule of thumb is about once a week. If this seems too often, consider why frequent praise is so important. Praise received is a positive motivating force for repeat behaviour. Silence from a manager is usually interpreted in a negative way. Studies have shown that employees who do not feel adequately recognised are twice as likely to say they will leave their company in the next year. Recognition is a habit, and it’s good practice to praise and recognise good work at least once a week.

Silent treatment does not work – reinforcing the affirmations that the team is doing a good job is showing your engagement, don’t only talk to them when things go wrong.

Engagement habit No. 2: Providing access to resources

The support of the manager is imperative when making sure that there are adequate resources so employees are not “handicapped” when he/she wants to act. If there are mountains that the manager cannot climb in order to provide resources, sometimes due to budget constraints or purchasing cutbacks, there are still a number of ways to maintain morale within the team.

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WHAT I LEARNED FROM THE DOJO PARTICIPANTS

By ROSHAN THIRAN

A few months ago, the Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MyDE) launched a leadership programme for chief executive officers (CEO) called the Leadership Dojo. 18 CEOs were selected as part of the pioneering batch, where they were given an opportunity to develop their leadership capabilities, business acumen and to learn new exciting skills to enable them to scale and grow their businesses.

I have been a part of this world-class organisation, and I am constantly learning and adapting to our ever-changing environment.

Here are my Top 12 lessons learnt from the participants in the Leadership Dojo class:

1. THE LEADERSHIP DOJO CLASSEES ARE HIGHLY SUCCESFUL

Every single leader in the Dojo class is successfully scaling businesses. If you start listening to their stories, you would be amazed to hear about some of them. They have learnt the importance of sustainability, and they are working very hard to become successful. In fact, if you start to discover the role their own “talent” played in their success, you will see an urgent similarity across all of them – they were very hard working and had worked very hard with the same determination of their success and were not intellectual able or luck. If you want to succeed, don’t just too much.

2. THEY DEVELOP EYES FOR OPPORTUNITY

As I joke to John Tsang, ‘Yves’ eyes and the other entrepreneurs’ eyes are ‘vigilant’ and they are always aware of the opportunities even when they are their eyes were closed. While most of us are lost at the back of the boardroom and how to communicate, each one of them saw different things. Even at the initial stage, all of their stories of how they found their opportunities were different. Nothing began when they saw gaps in the market, where no one was addressing. They ended up building businesses to address those gaps and create new opportunities. To become successful, we have to develop our eyes to see opportunities and spotting instruments like these Dojo class.

3. THEY LEVERAGE ON THE WISDOM OF MENTORS AND ADVICE

As an inexperienced and learnt from Tom Kennedy, ‘Only when the wisdom of the mentors and advisors are there that it is possible to find the next chapter of your life.’ And I agree. The more you are ideas driven, and finding new ways to grow. There is no way to flourish or survive and operate their “accelerator” mode by constantly having a group of business owners, varying their products and by relentlessly pushing themselves and their business forward.

4. THEY KNOW WHAT THEY ARE SMARTER IN YOUR BUSINESS

Sociologist Daniel G. Batable has identified some of the traits that make a successful leader. He explained that “to know what you are good at is not necessarily important as knowing your core strength.”

5. THEY FOCUS ON THE MUNDANITY OF THE DAILY

While I was in the Dojo class, I was so impressed of the amount of meetings they had to attend. Every single meeting was so important and had a direct impact on their organisation.

6. THEY KNOW WHAT THEY ARE SMARTER IN YOUR BUSINESS

Many leaders believe that they have to know the name of every person in their company and also in the industry they are in. What I learnt from the Dojo participants is that being smart is a good trait but not necessarily important requires practice, patience, practice. After the training, I understand that another key hallmark of these Dojo entrepreneurs is the ability to improve and become successful.

7. THEY WORK ON THE BUSINESS, RATHER THAN IN THE BUSINESS

Lamitchen Choong, and Khor Kong Khoo both taught the importance of “working on the business and not in it.” Of course, we are so focused on the operations and the daily grind of the business that we are used to the hustle and the “hard work.”

8. THEY BELIEVE DESPITE THE FACTS STACKED AGAINST THEM

Lamitchen Choong, and Khor Kong Khoo both taught the importance of “working on the business and not in it.” Of course, we are so focused on the operations and the daily grind of the business that we are used to the hustle and the “hard work.”

9. THEY UNDERSTAND THE IMPACTS OF BEING URGENT AND IMPORTANT

Many of us are always busy completing urgent matters that require our attention. However, there are so many urgent (yet not important) unimportant or work that got postponed because we are not working in the urgent. Mark Zuckerberg once said, “The question I ask myself like almost any other day is, ‘Am I doing the most important thing I could be doing?’”

10. THEY DON’T OPERATE ON A “NEED” BASIS

To succeed in life, you can’t operate on a “needs” basis. In almost all of the stories in the Leadership Dojo class, Jeremy Chong, Sinan Ismail, Lee Chuen Loong and others, they were consistent in saying that you need to be relentless in pursuing your dreams.

11. THEY UNDERSTAND THE IMPACTS OF BEING URGENT AND IMPORTANT

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12. THEY LEARN FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF OTHERS

I am sure that almost all of the CEOs in the Leadership Dojo class have learnt from the experiences of others. They have learned from their own experiences and also from the experiences of others.

The Leadership Dojo programme with MBT Lecturer and former Harvard Business School editor Ken Kawamura during a Dojo class session recently.

The following is a list of the participating CEOs in the first-ever Leadership Dojo programme:

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<td>Sarah Tan Chee Khoon</td>
<td>AIG Technologies Sdn Bhd</td>
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<td>Lee Chuan Looong</td>
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<td>Nohel Alish Khoon Neng Hadi</td>
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<td>Jeremy Chong Khoon</td>
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<td>John Ng</td>
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11
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