THE LOVE AND LEADERSHIP ISSUE:
WHERE DO YOU WEAR YOUR HEART?

4 SHOWING LOVE TO YOUR CUSTOMERS
7 EMBRACE INNOVATION NOT JUST APPRECIATE IT
9 TRANSFORMING LEARNING TO CHANGE LIVES

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PUTTING OUR PRIORITIES WHERE OUR HEART IS

With Valentine’s Day just around the corner, we thought we’d explore leadership and personal development as matters of the heart. After all, both are endeavours that — when pursued in earnest — require a good deal of courage.

Brené Brown points out in her best-seller, *The Gifts of Imperfection*, that the root of the word courage is cor — the Latin word for heart. Today, the word courage is often used synonymously with bravery, but Brown notes that in one of its earliest forms, courage originally meant “to speak one’s mind by telling all one’s heart.”

To some of us, that might sound like an unexpected new take on courage. To others, it’s spot-on, even obvious. What could be more courageous than baring our soul and risking rejection? We hope that this week’s cover gave you pause for thought as well. Where do you wear your heart? Where do you most boldly express your courage as a leader?

Are you someone who leads from the head — rational, pragmatic and guided by the evidence and facts? Or is your leadership approach ruled by the heart and therefore intuitive, relationship-driven and nurturing? Perhaps you’re the leader who wears her heart on her sleeve: you are spontaneous, emotionally driven and completely open with your teams and your nemeses alike.

Whichever of these you identify with most, we hope that this week’s articles will offer you fresh insights on ways to live, love and lead more wholeheartedly.

First up is Jeff Haden’s provocative call to ditch the notion that we should do what we love as our job. Before you dismiss him as a killjoy, however, hear him out. Sometimes passion alone is not a sufficient indicator of whether a professional pursuit can be a sustainable source of both income and personal fulfillment. What’s the right criteria then? Look over at page 3 to find out.

Those of us who work in sales have seen days when it’s simply impossible to associate the word “love” with the word “customer.” Sandy Clarke reminds us that taking a more relational approach in sales not only takes the pressure off the prospect, but also helps us connect more genuinely and open up opportunities to bring true value to customers.

Despite having originated as a parenting concept, “tough love” is also a useful idea when it comes to seeking a fine balance between authoritarian task-based leadership and a more relational, laissez-faire approach to leading people. Matt Naylor suggests that a nuanced appreciation of authoritative leadership can help leaders to establish their own culturally appropriate boundaries. Blue ocean strategist Raj Kumar challenges us to consider love at the organisational level. Many companies claim to champion innovation and creativity, but how many actually operate as if innovation were a deep passion for every employee? He argues that innovation is essential for sustainability and, with the right support in place, any organisation can build innovative thinking into its DNA.

What can a brutal guerrilla leader like Che Guevara teach you about love and leadership? Plenty, according to Dan Price. Values-driven leaders and organisations are the grassroots movement of today, driving a new wave of ethically-grounded businesses with a passion to derive profits by genuinely serving humanity. Read how a chance encounter in a coffee line moved a teenager Price to establish his now multi-million dollar business, and what a Marxist rebel has to do with all of this.

If Brené Brown’s meditation on the etymology of “courage” piqued your interest, you’ll enjoy reading what Bill George has to say about vulnerability. Quoting extensively from John Hope Bryant’s book Loves Leadership, George argues that being vulnerable and honest about our shortcomings is a tremendously liberating way to live — and a more powerful way to lead.

Next, we have Prietha Eswary taking us into the world of specialist educator Hilary Craig and her work among young people with different learning needs. Read on to discover the insight that convinced Craig of what her life’s work should be. Taking us back to basics is Travis Bradberry on the topic of cultivating genuine love for our alone time. Not only is this necessary to recharge ourselves, but it is also a secret to protecting time where we can develop more of our potential instead of getting swallowed up by social obligations. Bringing it all together is Michelle Gibbings’ excellent yet concise reminder that authentic leadership means making time to listen and having courage to hear out even our critics and dissenters.

May this Valentine’s Day mark a year of wholehearted engagement for you, and may you and your team be courageous in all you do.

Siaw Mei Li
Leaderonomics Editorial Team

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“IF YOUR LEADERSHIP IS TRULY GROUNDED IN LOVE, YOU’LL ALWAYS LAND IN THE CATEGORY OF A GOOD LEADER.”

— GLENN C. STEWART

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DO WHAT YOU LOVE?
SCARP THAT

DON'T BUILD A BUSINESS
BASED ON SOMETHING
YOU LOVE DOING

BY JEFF HADEN

I MAGINE that you’ve agreed to give advice to a group of business students but you can’t think of a theme. Here’s a guaranteed winner: Go with “Follow your passions and do what you love!”

That advice everyone loves to hear. You’ll kill. You’ll also be wrong.

“Telling someone to follow their passion – from an entrepreneur’s point of view – is disastrous,” says Cal Newport, Georgetown University professor and author of So Good They Can’t Ignore You: Why Skills Trump Passion in the Quest For Work You Love.

“That advice has probably resulted in more failed businesses than all the recessions combined because that’s not how the majority of people end up owning successful businesses.

“Passion is not something you follow. It is something that will follow you as you put in the hard work to become valuable to the world,” he says. Here’s why...

CAREER PASSIONS ARE RARE

It’s easy to confuse a hobby or interest for a profound passion that will result in career and business fulfillment. The reality is, that type of pre-existing passion is rarely valuable.

Don’t believe me? Think of something you’re passionate about. Or were passionate about when you were in high school. Write it down. Then apply this test: Will people pay you for it? Will they pay you a lot for it?

“Money matters, at least in a relative sense. Money is a neutral indicator of value. Potential customers don’t care about your passion. Potential customers care about giving up their money,” says Newport.

A passion people won’t pay you for is hardly the basis for a career. It’s a hobby. You can still love your hobbies – just love them in your spare time. The key as an entrepreneur is to identify a relevant passion.

PASSION TAKES TIME

The “hobby” passion is much different from the kind you hope to find in your career.

“Producing something important, gaining respect for it, feeling a sense of control over your life, and finding a connection to other people are things that give people a real sense of passion,” Newport says. Roughly speaking, work can be broken down into a job, a career, or a calling. A job pays the bills, a career is a path towards an increasingly better work; a calling is work that is an important part of your life and identity. Clearly, most people want their work to be a calling.

What is the strongest indicator that shows a person sees her work as a calling?

According to research, it’s the number of years spent on the job. The more experience you have, the more likely you are to love your work.

Why? The more experience you have, the better your skills and the greater your satisfaction in having those skills. The more experience you have, the more you can see how your work has benefited others. You’ve also had more time to develop strong professional and even personal relationships with some of your employees, vendors, and customers.

Where business success is concerned, passion is almost always the result of time and effort. It’s not a prerequisite.

PASSION IS A SIDE EFFECT OF MASTERY

“The myth of the virtuoso is also a problem. In most cases, people don’t think of someone, who became a virtuoso, as having unusual talent when they were very young,” Newport says. Instead, most highly skilled people were exposed to something in a way that made it interesting. Take music: Something (a song, an instrument, a teacher, etc) initially inspired them. They started learning and then benefited from what Newport describes as a feedback effect.

“If you practise hard, soon you might find you’re the best in your group of students,” he says. “That’s great feedback and it motivates you to keep practising. Then you’re one of the best in a larger group and that’s motivating too. Practice and achievement is a gradual, self-reinforcing process.

If the work is interesting and you think there’s a market – meaning people will pay you for that work – that’s enough to get you started. Then, the work itself will give you the feedback you need. Creating a viable product will motivate you to develop your skills so you can refine that product or create more products. Landing one customer will motivate you to develop more skills so you can land more customers.

The satisfaction of achieving one level of success spurs you on to gain the skills to reach the next level, and the next, and the next. And one day you wake up feeling incredibly fulfilled.

“The satisfaction of improving is deeply satisfying, as eons of craftspeople will attest to. The process of becoming really good at something valuable is a fulfilling and satisfying process in itself and is the foundation for a great entrepreneurial career.”

Would you like to learn how to love what you do? Leaderonomics will show you ways to fulfill your potential and excel in your career. All you need to do is spend some time on our site to pick up great insights that will help you develop passion for your work and scale new heights in your career. Block just 20 minutes a day in your calendar forleaderonomics.com and see yourself grow into a leader.

“The more experience you have, the more likely you are to love your work... Where business success is concerned, passion is almost always the result of time and effort. It’s not a prerequisite.”
I M A G I N E yourself as a sales executive, waiting on the first few customers to come through the door. As they begin to trickle in, what’s the first thing that comes to mind? Chances are, you’re thinking about ways to persuade them to buy your product, right? After all, customers don’t hang around and you have targets to think of — you need to make the most of the small window of opportunity that’s open to you and sell, sell, sell.

If you were a sales executive in the 1990s, this might have been a fine and occasionally successful strategy to embrace. But these days, customers are much savvier and can spot a hard sell from a mile away. People have so much choice out there now, and with the Internet allowing for comparisons and reviews on the spot, companies have to be nuanced in their approach to landing the sale.

Actually, swap that. The term “landing the sale” should be scratched from the vocabulary altogether — customers can also spot false sincerity within a few sentences of being greeted.

I’m a horrible salesman. Or at least I am whenever I feel forced to sell for the sake of targets. During a brief stint of working in retail banking, I recall one period where customer service KPIs (key performance indicators) needed to be improved, and so “selling” was, for the time being, a reactive process rather than proactive.

What this meant was that, in order to deal with customers more efficiently, finance products were only to be sold whenever the customer initiated an enquiry. The pressure was off — how glorious it felt not to have to ask people if they wanted this product or that type of loan.

Interestingly, during this period of less pressure, sales increased. Because the focus was now strictly on customer service (which should always be the case, anyway), I found that, rather than putting pressure on customers, I naturally began to ask about their needs rather than the bank’s interests. Due to that simple shift from pressurised pushing to showing genuine interest, more customers would turn away. By showing a real interest and asking questions, customers are more likely to be attracted to what we can offer.

Let’s see how the conversation could have been improved:

**SHOWING GENUINE INTEREST**

Customer: “Thanks for your help. It’s good to get a handle on things, especially at this time of the year when the finances are a little tight.”

Representative: “Sorry to hear that — if things are a little tight, perhaps we could interest you in a loan to help consolidate your bills?”

Customer: “No thank you, I’ve got enough to keep on top of without worrying about an additional loan.”

Representative: “I understand. But we have some fantastic rates at the moment and I’m sure we could help you save more money.”

Customer: “I appreciate the offer, but no thank you.”

In this conversation, it’s obvious that the customer representative has the “must meet my target” mindset fixed firmly in place. “Sorry to hear that” and “I understand” sound little more than insincere segues into the attempted sell.

As an example, let’s take two typical conversations and see the difference between pushing the sale and showing a genuine interest in the needs of the customer:

**PUSHING THE SALE**

Customer: “Tell me about your amazing products and what you can do for them, but think about it: if you walked into a restaurant and the waiter suddenly tried to sell you a dish straight away, would you make a return visit? Probably not. Great customer service is all about getting to know the needs of the individual, rather than focusing on what you have to sell. Whenever we push people, it drives them away. By showing a real interest and asking questions, customers are more likely to be attracted to what we can offer when we choose to put them first. The best salespeople and the most effective organisations recognise that the central focus when it comes to great customer service is to first build rapport (i.e. give the customer space, show a genuine interest, ask relevant and timely questions) and then get to know the customer’s needs.

If a sale is unlikely, don’t push it. Customers who have a great experience, even though they don’t purchase, are more likely to purchase something in future, compared to those who are made to feel like their wallet is more important than their needs.
TOUGH LOVE NEEDN’T BE SO TOUCHY

HITTING THAT SWEET SPOT BETWEEN TASK-BASED AND RELATIONAL LEADERSHIP

BY MATT NAYLOR
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Ever since Bill Milliken coined the phrase “tough love” in his 1948 book of the same name, the phrase has largely been associated with the science of parenting. While it may seem crass and patronising to compare your employees to children in this way, there are of course certain principles of parenting and leadership that do tidy over. Differing styles will see different results depending on the company culture and even from employee to employee.

Fine-tuning the balance between being a strict disciplinarian and being overly nonchalant and happy-go-lucky is essential in any leader finding the sweet spot of “tough love.” Remember that both words require the same amount of attention—you must be as “tough” as you are “loving” in order to reap the rewards. To locate the crucial midpoint, we must go back and use the parental metaphor once more.

FINDING THE AUTHORITATIVE YOU

In psychological terms, there are two styles of parenting that fall under the umbrella of “tough love” and the overlap of how these can be brought into the workplace environment is there for all to see. The key is to build up a culture that is authoritative in nature rather than authoritarian, that is that parameters are set without killing off imagination and self-confidence.

The employee must understand that your feedback is constructive criticism as opposed to morale-diminishing strictness. Nothing is harder than working for somebody whom you feel reviles in putting down your ideas and destroying your self-confidence to build themselves up more. Anybody can handle criticism, however, if they know that it is designed to encourage and improve their work.

A 2010 study in the United States found that employees spent nearly 20 hours a week worrying about “something a boss said or did.” Many employers would take this to demonstrate that they should be overly cautious about their approach and choose their words carefully.

However, an authoritative leader understands that building the right culture of respect and continuous improvement will garner the desired results without needing to overthink their methods. An authoritarian leader merely marches, head down, towards a precise goal, without much care for meaningful participation from others and often using punishment as an effective method of control. Unfortunately, far too many leaders in today’s fast-paced marketplace feel that they have no time for a lack of productivity and too often subconsciously slip into an authoritarian role that damages employee happiness rates significantly.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, we have all either worked for, or seen, that member of senior management that confuses likability with respect and treats those below them as friends rather than work partners. While this can be excellent for creating a positive atmosphere, it then becomes very difficult to motivate this workforce during a time of increased pressure.

Complacency and apathy towards workload can begin to sink in for an employee that becomes demotivated by a leader giving them too much rope. This is where finding that sweet spot in the middle becomes so important. Remember that it is OK to be strict. Setting parameters and having expectations of your employees does not make you a cold-hearted slave driver.

If your criticisms and, in the most extreme examples, disciplinary actions are consistent and reasonable, it should always have the desired effect of motivating the employee towards self-improvement.

It is also human nature to want to be liked, however, and no leader wants to feel as though they have lost the respect of their workforce in a cold and austere working environment. Many leaders find their roles difficult to handle at first, worrying that they are toeing one of the two extremes of the strictness curve. That balancing act can take years to perfect, but is always a worthy feather to any leader’s cap.

CULTURAL EXTREMES AROUND THE WORLD

Applying to more than just corporate cultures, different cultures around the world have their differing leadership styles which naturally lends itself to a different approach when dealing with employees.

In many business matters, German leaders have a reputation for drawing maximum productivity from their workforce. However, a study conducted by Information Factory and Personalwirtschaft show that German leaders somewhat lack reliability to their employees. The data shows that 46% of employees report not getting regular feedback from their superiors, while 75% of managers believe they convey enthusiasm—a sentiment shared by only 36% of their staff.

Clearly this surprising lack of support indicates that German companies prefer an authoritarian approach, although their harsh leadership style does not appear to affect their corporation’s productivity and development.

In Sweden, meanwhile, corporate law mandates that important decisions must be made with all employees before any kind of implementation occurs. This democratic style has led to some of the highest employee satisfaction rates of any nation.

The “Swedish management style” has become a failed beast and many companies around the world are now trying to recreate it, with an informal and relaxed office atmosphere that finds no time for office politics and unnecessary bureaucracy.

Horses for courses and no two corporate cultures are alike. From employee to employee, company to company, industry to industry and nation to nation, there are no sets rules for the employer–employee relationship. Find your own midpoint for tough love and create your own culture.

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**LOVE INNOVATION OR DIE! WHY COMPANIES NEED TO EMBRACE IT INSTEAD OF JUST APPRECIATING ITS VALUE**

Companies that love innovation like Lego have been around for years and will continue to be so because of their love for innovation and creativity.

## V – VALUE INNOVATION

All innovation activities, ideas and projects that are initiated must be aligned with the company’s vision, mission and strategy. These innovation initiatives and ideas implemented need to be expensive and should in fact be guided by the principles of Value Innovation.

**Value innovation** is an important strategy for organisations to better appreciate innovation and to find a way to a successful strategy, value innovation is about increasing the value of the product at the same time. It is a great concept created by Professor Kim and Renée Mauborgne to help companies break the boundaries in innovation.

Today, value innovation is a must-have; you can and should guide a company to ensure profitability for an innovation initiative, idea or project in the company.

Many companies think of innovation as an expense but organisational innovation is not something that can be invested in, but is not operationalised as it were. If you're in the market for Lego, you could start a new Lego set to be produced and sold around the world. This is a true example of customer engagement and relationship management.

It is important for companies to have a system that integrates ideas into execution and put proper processes in place to ensure the ideas are collected, managed, and executed with appropriate resources allocated to the system from the beginning. Many companies have the ideal concept of having an innovation system put in place but do not effectively put it into practice.

It is important to have a system in place that has a process to put the ideas into execution and put proper processes in place to ensure the ideas are collected, managed, and executed with appropriate resources allocated to the system.

This is truly worth the one-off investment. I have planned to own our very own Lego set in the world but have not been able to because of the many processes and systems put in place to ensure the Lego product is as perfect as possible.

The connection and passion I felt for Lego has been the key to unlocking them.

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## L – LOCK IN IDEAS

An organisation that is hungry for innovation, creates a culture where people can and should be encouraged to love innovation. Lego has a formal system of managing these ideas and making sure the ideas are submitted at the best possible time. It is important for companies to have a system that integrates ideas into execution and put proper processes in place to ensure the ideas are collected, managed, and executed with appropriate resources allocated to the system.

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## O – OPERATIONALISE A SYSTEM

When it comes to innovation, most organisations have a system that is “nice to have” instead of a must-have. However, during the planning stage, these organisations are not seeing the full picture. Innovation is not another feature but an “ancestor” but a new platform.

However, innovation doesn’t necessarily have to be an expensive venture. Lego has a system in place that is designed to integrate ideas into execution and put proper processes in place to ensure the ideas are collected, managed, and executed with appropriate resources allocated to the system.

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## CONCLUSION

Many industries are being disrupted today, be it banking, healthcare and many more to come. This is the age of disruption and seasonal disruptions. It all starts with you loving innovation.

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### PROACTIVE VS AD HOC INNOVATION

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### EMERGENCE AND ENJOY THE RIDE

The innovation pipeline can stimulate the growth of two types of organisations in existing markets – Reactive Solutions and Innovative Solutions. Lego is an example of expansive organisations.

Lego is an example of expansive organisations. Lego has been around for years and is an expert in innovation. If you go to their website, you will be amazed at how many ideas are coming into Lego for innovation and driving change.

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I MAGINE a moment when you felt fully comfortable with others. You weren’t guarding what you said. You weren’t monitoring how others perceived you. And you shared life stories you rarely do.

You were vulnerable and you were perfectly authentic with others. You were accepted by them and that gave you a deep sense of well-being.

For many of us, we achieve this level of vulnerability only with our closest family and friends. Even then, we rarely expose our deepest secrets, as we hide behind masks, excuses, and obfuscations.

For many years of my career, I lacked the confidence to share my weaknesses, fears, and vulnerabilities. I thought I had to be perfect and not show vulnerability. It wasn’t until I had a crucible in my fifties and realised I was losing sight of my “True North” of helping others that I felt more comfortable in my skin and had a stronger sense of well-being, and my relationships with colleagues improved.

A year after I joined Medtronic, I faced a test of my willingness to admit my mistakes. I reorganised the company around three global regions and appointed an experienced executive from a subsidiary company as president of Europe. Several colleagues were wary of him due to his aggressiveness but I felt he was exactly what we needed.

Six months later, our general counsel informed me that our auditors had uncovered a bribery fund he had been running in the European subsidiary by funneling money from secret Swiss bank accounts to Italian physicians. We terminated him immediately and reported the issue to the United States and European authorities. That turned out to be the easy part.

It was much more difficult to explain to our board of directors and executive team that I had made the mistake by failing to investigate his values. Because I admitted my mistakes and acted vulnerably, the board supported me fully, and respected me more because I took full responsibility rather than blaming him.

In his book Love Leadership, John Hope Bryant, who was homeless for six months as a teenager, proclaims, “Vulnerability is power.” When I share this idea with executives in my classroom, a look of apprehension comes over their faces. Yet, by

VULNERABILITY IS POWER

IT CAN LEAD TO AUTHENTIC BUSINESS RESULTS AND RELATIONSHIPS

BY BILL GEORGE

to lead and manage effectively?

Are you training your employees for your competitors?

Unless you intentionally design your culture, training for competencies alone might just be equipping your employees to leave you!

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Bill is a professor at Harvard Business School, where he has taught leadership since 2004. He is the author of four best-selling books: Leading in Crisis, True North, Finding Your True North, and Authentic Leadership, as well as True North Groups. To engage with him, e-mail us at editor@leaderonomics.com. To read more about this and other articles go to www.leaderonomics.com

www.leaderonomics.org
SPREADING THE JOY OF SUCCESSFUL LEARNING
TRANSFORMING THE LIVES OF LEARNERS WITH DIFFERENT NEEDS

By PRETHIBA ESVARY
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"When I was little and people showed me a photograph of my sister and said ‘your sister is third from the left,’ I would mentally put myself into the picture and count ‘One, two, three’ from the left... I always got it wrong and I wouldn’t stick around to anybody."

T HIS is how Hilary Craig recounts her experience of failing at what some of us may consider a simple comprehension exercise. As a result, she deduced that she was just less capable than her peers, which is not the case in reality.

Craig, a specialist educator and founder of a private practice in Malaysia, said she wasn’t born with any particular disability but emphasised that each child has a different learning style. The anecdote above (the term she prefers for students with learning disabilities) may think, and how and why they might get things wrong in school.

VENTURE INTO BUSINESS
Having raised a son who was diagnosed with severe dyslexia and having observed, firsthand, numerous children falling through the cracks during her time as a teacher, Craig was motivated to do something sustainable that caters to the needs of different learners.

And so Hills (Happiness is Learning Success) learning was birthed in 2004 with the goal of helping these children, their parents, educators, and organisations by customising learning strategies according to the child’s learning style.

Craig admits that starting a business in Malaysia as a foreigner was not an easy task, one reason being her unfamiliarity with Bahasa Malaysia, which meant she couldn’t read the legal documents herself. Fortunately, she had a Malay friend who helped her.

Another obstacle she faced was dealing with bureaucracy. Craig had no formal business knowledge nor leadership grooming. With passion and a clear mission to help different learners as her fuel, however, she picked up and mastered the knowledge and skills she needed along the way, and grew the business into what it is today.

A LITTLE ABOUT HER
While the now 71-year-old is no longer working full-time, she is still actively involved in her business. A typical workday for the soft-spoken educator begins working full-time, she is still actively involved in her business. A typical workday for the soft-spoken educator begins with participating in morning assemblies with the children, followed by meetings with parents who need advice or intend to send their child to the centre, and sitting in on sessions between a teacher and their student, and offering her input.

Originally from Ireland, Craig often goes back to Australia which she considers her home mostly because her three children and her grandchildren currently reside there.

Throughout the course of her adult life, Craig has travelled to and lived in Canada, Saudi Arabia and Holland due to the requirements of her husband’s job as an airport planner. This was also what brought her to Malaysia.

HUMILITY GOES A LONG WAY
All her life, Craig never saw herself as particularly good at any one thing, which is something I found surprising, coming from someone as successful as herself. In fact, she humbly conveyed during the interview that she was never a star student; she was “just a B-minus student.”

But then she went on to attain two bachelor’s degrees in arts and education, a master’s in education, specialist qualifications, and accreditations in several areas. She now has 28 years of experience in schools and colleges (excluding her time at Hills) and 15 years of private practice. To top it off, she is internationally acknowledged as an “innovative educator, therapist and a dynamic workshop presenter” and I’ve heard that she’s a great boss too!

AN EXPERIENCE THAT BUILT A LASTING IMPACT
While her son Philip was the main driving factor for Craig to start her private practice, what really influenced her to run this practice for a living was her experience working in a community college.

There, she worked with a group comprised of mainstream adult students and several prison inmates who were about to be released on parole from the local penitentiary in Canada.

Coming from a sheltered background, Craig had preconceived ideas about the all-male group of inmates. Upon meeting them and listening to their stories however, she realised that, almost without exception, each inmate was once a child who could not read due to some form of learning disability.

She says, “That had a huge impact on me as a human being. That predisposed me to want to help kids to make sure they stayed safe.”

While we can’t help change the universe, Craig believes in helping individual individuals at a time, and that is what she and her staff do with each child that comes in to their office.

WHAT IT TAKES TO BE IN THIS PROFESSION
As with any profession, there are tough stakeholders to deal with. In this case, they can come in the form of difficult parents. Craig observes that parents are emotionally tied up with their children and often the emotions they express are out of sheer frustration and a loss as to how to help their children.

This is where perseverance and resilience come in as crucial traits for someone working in this field. She says, “If we can give these children and their parents the perseverance and resilience to be able to withstand hardships and bad events, that’s very important.”

Aside from that, one needs to be flexible, compassionate, people-oriented, open-minded, passionate, and have the ability to see things from another party’s point of view.

In an interview on BFM with Freda Liu, Craig said, “It takes commitment because it’s not easy work. You have to have a great deal of patience. You have to be committed to the families of each individual child.”

Last but not least, and something which Craig considers compulsory is having a sense of humour. She says, “If you can bring laughter in, you bring learning in.”

NO GREATER JOY
“I get great satisfaction out of working with parents and helping them to understand why their child is the way he or she is, and helping to solve their problems,” Craig says. She adds that nothing beats helping these children develop themselves, because helping them equates to helping the entire family, and it’s a lovely sense of accomplishment and satisfaction which you may not get in every job.

In a Nutshell
My interview with this wise and delightful educator made me realise that we are often shaped by the unpredictable experiences we go through in life. In her case, if it weren’t for her son’s condition or her experiences with the students and jail inmates who were falling through the cracks, she wouldn’t have been so passionate about special needs education, and she wouldn’t be where she is today.

Craig also further cemented for me the fact that anything is possible if you combine passion and hard work, with a clear vision of what you aim to accomplish. So, yes, she is a living proof who, academically, nationally, and ability (or disability) is not a limit. The only limiting factor to your success is you.
THE POWER OF MAKING ‘ME TIME’

7 INCREDIBLE THINGS THAT HAPPEN ONCE YOU LEARN TO LOVE BEING ALONE

“ALL MEN’S MISFORTUNES SPRING FROM THEIR HATRED OF BEING ALONE.”
– JEAN DE LA BRUYÈRE

A study of 600 computer programmers at 52 companies found that while productivity levels were relatively stable within each company, they varied greatly from one company to the next. The more productive companies had one thing in common: they ditched the ultra-hip open office in favour of private workspaces that granted freedom from interruptions. Of the top performers, 62% said they had adequate privacy at work, while only 19% of the worst performers shared that opinion. And, among the low performers, 76% said they were often unnecessarily interrupted.

Solitude isn’t just a professional plus; it’s also good for your mental and emotional well-being. To get the most out of life, you must learn to enjoy spending time alone. The benefits of solitude are too numerous to catalogue, but here are some of the best.

1. You recuperate and recharge. All of us – even the hopelessly extroverts among us – need time to recuperate and recharge. There’s nothing like spending time alone to make this happen. The peace, quiet, and mental solitude you experience when you’re by yourself is essential to recovering from the stresses of daily living.

2. You can do what you want. As fun as it is to spend time with other people, it inevitably leads to compromise. You’re constantly modifying your ideas to accommodate other people’s desires and opinions. Being alone frees you up to do exactly what you want when you want. You can throw on whatever you feel like wearing, eat what you feel like eating, and work on projects that are meaningful to you.

3. You learn to trust yourself. Freedom is more than doing what you want; it’s the ability to trust your gut and to think clearly, without any pressure or outside influence. Being alone helps you form a clear understanding of who you are, what you know, and what’s right for you. It teaches you to trust yourself.

4. You learn to be introspective. Solitude is the ultimate in self-awareness. It’s nearly impossible to have an introspective moment unless you’re by yourself. When you’re alone, you develop your own ideas and opinions, without having them watered down by what anyone else thinks.

5. You develop a renewed sense of gratitude. Spending time alone allows you to appreciate what you have. While you’re by yourself, it’s easy to think about all the things you’re lacking. But when you’re by yourself, it’s easy to start thinking about all the things you have.

6. You appreciate other people more. Absence really does make the heart grow fonder. Time alone lets you see people in a whole new light, and it helps you to develop a renewed sense of gratitude for who they are and what they do.

7. You get more done. It’s said that “many hands make light work,” and while that might be true when it comes to taking leaves, it’s a completely different story with cognitive tasks. Researchers from Texas A&M found that group brainstorming hinders productivity due to “cognitive fixation.” Cognitive fixation is the tendency for people working in groups to get stuck on other people’s ideas, reducing their ability to come up with anything new, and the bigger the group, the more fixated everyone becomes. Spending time alone not only eliminates distractions but also ensures that you don’t have trouble with “too many cooks.”

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

Everyone benefits from solitude. Take the opportunity this week to spend some time alone.

Self-awareness is the foundation of emotional intelligence, and you can’t increase your EQ without it. Since self-awareness requires understanding your emotions and how you react to various people and situations, this necessitates careful self-reflection, and self-reflection happens best when you’re alone.

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Explore how our Self-Awareness programmes can help your team use their “me time” more effectively for personal and professional growth. For more information, e-mail editor@leaderonomics.com.
THERE'S a famous saying that goes: “Nice guys finish last.” It's widely attributed to a US baseball legend Leo Durocher, who spent many years as manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers and New York Giants.

It's a saying that has entered popular lexicon. It implies that to be successful you should only look after yourself. It suggests that for you to win – everyone else has to lose.

It advocates selfish, self-serving and, at worst, narcissistic behaviour.

It's a sad reality that in organisations you will see some people adopt this style of behaviour.

Everything they do and say is all about them. They are focused on how they can position themselves for success, at the expense of others.

You also see this play out with organisations when they try and squash smaller players in the market, and use their market power to change their rules to their advantage.

This type of behaviour isn't necessary, nor is it sustainable. You don't need to step over others and push those in front of you out of the way to be successful.

It's an old-fashioned and outdated way of thinking.

The sharing economy, which is rapidly growing (to the extent that PricewaterhouseCoopers estimates it could generate US$335bil in revenue by 2025), is making it more important than ever to find ways to successfully work in partnership with people.

Companies are discovering that doing it alone is harder, and reputation matters.

At an individual level, being known as “nice” doesn't mean you are a “pushover” and that you’ll let everyone walk all over you. It means you treat people with respect and act with integrity. You work to build collaborative partnerships with the people around you. You are kind, considerate and co-operative with others. You understand the power of compassion, fairness and, yes, love.

When you genuinely care about your team members and colleagues, you are far more willing to collaborate and work together to achieve jointly successful outcomes.

If you wanted a further reason as to why you should collaborate, research has shown that co-operating with others activates the same reward circuitry in your brain as when you eat chocolate.

Being a leader with heart is simple. And influential leaders know it is the simple things that matter. Being friendly. Saying hello to people in the morning. Celebrating a team member’s birthday. Recognising important milestones for people. Helping others.

Remembering it is not always about you. These actions build the leader’s personal reputation as someone that people want to know and associate with. It creates relationships that are built on trust and mutual respect.

Relationships of this nature are enduring, purposeful and successful. It is relationships like these that can help propel a person’s career forward.

If you are wondering how your leadership style is being received by those around you. Ask yourself:

- What are people saying or not saying to me?
- Am I the last person to find out “bad news” or are people comfortable to bring forward issues to me?
- How engaged is my team? Is it working as a high performing team, where there is strong connection and cohesiveness?
- How productive is the team? Is good progress being made?
- Are there unresolved issues or high levels of conflict in the team, which I am turning a blind eye to?

Answering these questions will provide early insights into elements of your leadership style. But you need to go further.

You need to be:

1. Prepared to self-reflect – so that you are able to take the time to see how you are feeling, thinking and ultimately reacting to what is going on around you.

2. Welcome all types of news – even news that is difficult to hear. Not only is your reaction a test of your character, it sets the standard for what happens in the future. If you shoot the messenger, next time an issue arises, you’re less likely to find people willing to alert you to it.

3. Talk to people at all levels of the organisation – hierarchy can interfere with the information you receive as information can be filtered and sanitised before it hits your desk. This is because people don’t want to look bad and they want to paint the most optimistic picture of what is happening. Talking with people across, and up and down the organisation ensures you have a better handle on what is happening.

4. Beware of gatekeepers – whilst your support staff will often be acting with good intent, if access to you is so heavily managed that it is impossible for people to see you, you will find it harder to have a realistic assessment of progress and issues.

5. Take the time to walk the floor – Casually walking around the office and incidental conversations can often prove an invaluable way of finding out what is going on. It’s also a great way to build rapport and relationships with people.

6. Don’t silence the dissenters – It is often the person with the dissenting opinion or the person who is asking the probing questions who will help you see the issue from a different perspective. Whilst this can be frustrating, it is usually helpful in the long run as you can take comfort from the fact that you have examined the issue from multiple perspectives.

Embracing these elements takes leadership. Leadership where you lead from the heart, not just the head. The benefit of this approach is that the more you adopt actions of this nature the more engaged your team will be. They’ll know that you have their backs. They’ll recognise that you support their efforts to try new things and to make progress.

So, next time you think you need to push and shove your way to the top, remember that nice people don’t finish last.
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