WHAT GOES INTO THE MAKING OF A LEADER?

3 MOULDING KIDS BEYOND ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

4 CRUCIBLE MOMENTS: TURNING ADVERSITY INTO ADVANTAGE

6 UNPACKING THE SCIENCE OF BUILDING LEADERS

There are more than 12 great leadership articles in this week’s pullout. However, we have some 50 new articles each month, plus a library of 4,000 great videos, podcasts and articles at www.leaderonomics.com.

Don’t miss out on greatness. Surf the site and grow as a leader today!
The Alchemy of Building Great Leaders

Understanding the leadership development process equips us to plan our own journey as well as to better support others in their growth.

If you're a regular reader of the Leaderonomics pullout, there's a good chance you're interested in the topic of leadership development and familiar with the life stories of many great leaders.

Well, today, the leadership story on the board is yours.

From years of helping organisations and communities to build up leaders in their midst, we've gleaned insights that can help every individual identify growth and learning opportunities amid the various experiences of their lives. Through this issue's feature articles, we invite you to reflect on the leadership stories closest to you — your own and those of people whose lives you touch every day.

The first two articles address stages in early leadership development. Sandy Clarke, a regular contributor and former managing editor at Leaderonomics, takes a leaf from Finland's widely admired public education system and suggests ways to temper the stress and intensity of Asian academic expectations with habits and practices that promote a lifelong love of discovery and learning.

Clarke also writes on crucial moments — a critical formative point in personal development — and illustrates how it played out in businessman Sidney Harman's handling of an initially embarrassing workers' rebellion at his plant. Companion articles include stories of trailblazers who thrived by overcoming failure and adversity. Read about the leading automotive brand that grew out of the ashes of World War II. Consider also that we might not have internet memes as we know them today if a certain young man from South Korea had been successful with the first company he founded.

This week's centrespread article is a long piece, but well worth your time. Join our CEO Roshan Thiran as he unpacks some of the research that he and the Leaderonomics Research & Development team have been working on in the Science of Building Leaders. He describes key formative experiences and critical processes that are the building blocks of a good and effective leader's character development. These important phases and checkpoints inform the way Leaderonomics diagnoses, designs and delivers personal and professional development programmes for everyone from top CEOs to young students from struggling, disadvantaged communities. It's an illuminating read that will likely transform not just your own leadership journey, but also the ones of people you come into regular contact with.

Are the virtues you're cultivating relevant only to your resume or will you also be remembered for them in your eulogy? Bill George highlights the importance of identifying our life's True North, and the difference between building a life of success versus a life of significance.

Relationship-building skills can make or break a new manager's bid to win over her team. Eric Lau emphasizes the importance of identifying our life's True North, and the difference between building a life of success versus a life of significance.

We would love to hear your thoughts on the topics of this week's stories and articles. Drop us a line at editor@leaderonomics.com to share what resonates — and even what doesn't. We would love to hear your thoughts on the topics of this week's stories and articles. Drop us a line at editor@leaderonomics.com to share what resonates — and even what doesn't. Engage us and your friends in real-time via Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and Twitter. We look forward to keeping the conversation going and to growing with you.

Siaw Mei Li
Leaderonomics Editorial Team

Leadership Nuggets

The Science of Building Leaders

We can help tell your organizational story to the world. For more information, please contact us at editor@leaderonomics.com or call us at +601 7957 5890/5864.
I’ve not often my heart sinks when reading news articles about the stresses and strains placed on students by their education systems. There are, after all, few countries with perfect set-ups so it’s hardly a surprise to find that young people take the brunt of any shortcomings as they make their way through school life.

But recently, I read an article highlighting concerns regarding Singapore’s education system: a highly-efficient, effective system though it is, the psychological effect it has on students is astounding. One 16-year-old harrowingly described education in Singapore as being so intense that “one’s dreams could be shattered in a matter of seconds if we fail”. Another recalled a period of study, revealing that they slept for just three hours per day in a run-up to their exams, inducing a high fever as a result of the stress and sleep deprivation.

Before I left Scotland to come to Malaysia, I had a conversation with a veteran journalist who wished, in a lamenting tone, that “the education system in Scotland could be as effective as some Asian countries, such as South Korea”. I wasn’t sure how to respond. A National Public Radio report from 2015 described a horrific trend of teen suicides in South Korea, commenting, “Recently, two 16-year-old girls in the city of Daegu jumped to their deaths, leaving a note saying, ‘We hate school.’ It’s just one tragedy in a country where suicide is the leading cause of death among teens, and 11- to 15-year-olds report the highest amount of stress out of 10 developed nations.”

Is this really the best way to motivate young people towards building a successful future for themselves? The relentless pursuit to ensure high-achieving children really worth pushing them to the point where, if they bring home a ‘B’, they feel, at best, like losers or, in the worst cases, suicidal?

Mark Twain offered the iron motif that “he never let schooling interfere with my education”. Malcolm X advised that “just because you have colleges and universities doesn’t mean you have education”, and Noam Chomsky holds the view that “the education system in America is a complete flop rather than a respected model throughout the world. In Finland, children don’t begin school until the age of seven and their standards aren’t measured at all during the first six years. The national curriculum contains only broad guidelines; teachers spend only four hours per day in the classroom; and reports suggest Finland spends around 30% less on each student than America does on its education.”

By Asian standards, the Finnish education system should be a complete flop rather than a respected model throughout the world. In Finland, children don’t begin school until the age of seven and their standards aren’t measured at all during the first six years. The national curriculum contains only broad guidelines; teachers spend only four hours per day in the classroom; and reports suggest Finland spends around 30% less on each student than America does on its education. This is really the best way to motivate young people towards building a successful future for themselves? Is the relentless pursuit to ensure high-achieving children really worth pushing them to the point where, if they bring home a ‘B’, they feel, at best, like losers or, in the worst cases, suicidal?

1. Allow children to be children – let them play

Finnish children begin school when they are suitably developed to do so – and their learning is done through exploration and free play, with over an hour’s worth of recess per day, rather than being cooped up in the classroom. As the renowned developmental psychologist John Piaget observed, “Play is the answer to how anything new comes about.”

2. Give children sufficient time to rest

Study after study has shown that having sufficient rest is key for growth and learning. Finnish students normally have three or four 75-minute classes in a day, with several breaks in between. The school day ends between 2pm and 2.45pm. Conversely, young people who are forced into being “switched-on” for much of the day are much less likely to absorb useful information. Even those who manage to be successful in such harsh conditions are likely to suffer from high levels of stress and other mental issues.

3. Stop equating learning with grades

Why is it children aren’t graded during potty training (penish the thought) and yet, as soon as they reach school, it becomes all about the grades? Somewhere in between, we forget that learning is about exploration, discovery, pleasure and passion rather than achieving set standards for the purpose of future admission into some prestigious institution. Imagine what students could achieve – imagine their love for creation and innovation – if only they were free from the ever-loomng cloud of measurement and examination.

4. Kill the homework, foster participation

Finnish children take home the least amount of homework in the world – and they generally don’t have tutors outside class, either. There’s no pressure to do any more than the work required of them in school and, as a result, Finnish students are more engaged in the time they spend learning, which means there’s no need for the hundreds of hours of additional tuition that many students in Asia receive.

5. Have less structure and build more trust

In the business world, many organisations have implemented progressive policies based on trust – such as flexible working arrangements – realising that quality of output is less about the amount of time given, and more about the quality invested in the time spent on projects and tasks.

The Finnish education system is also built on mutual trust between parents, teachers, students, and the system itself. With a focus on results in terms of value rather than attainment, an ecosystem of support, cohesion and progress trumps those based on rigid structure, stringent rules, and unnecessary burden.

What is theanswer to how anything new comes about? Is this really the best way to motivate young people towards building a successful future for themselves? Is the relentless pursuit to ensure high-achieving children really worth pushing them to the point where, if they bring home a ‘B’, they feel, at best, like losers or, in the worst cases, suicidal? Many students who struggle to cope with the pressure.

By Asian standards, the Finnish education system should be a complete flop rather than a respected model throughout the world. In Finland, children don’t begin school until the age of seven and their standards aren’t measured at all during the first six years. The national curriculum contains only broad guidelines; teachers spend only four hours per day in the classroom; and reports suggest Finland spends around 30% less on each student than America does on its students.

Thanks to Finland’s unorthodox approach to education, it sends more students to college than any other European country, and the learning gap between the strongest and weakest students is the smallest throughout the world. How does Finland produce such staggering results? Here are some reasons why the country’s education system commands such a high degree of respect, and what parents and teachers – who learn from the Scandinavians in terms of positive child development.

The most successful leaders are storytellers.

By mastering business storytelling they achieve extraordinary business results.

This special session will preview practical techniques to connect and lead effectively through storytelling. Led by Mark Schenk of Anecdote, the world leader in the use of storytelling in business, together with former Unilever storyteller Bharat Avalani, this event is open only to managing directors, directors and general managers of businesses.

Mark Schenk
Managing Director, Anecdote
Bharat Avalani
Global Partner, Anecdote

Storytelling for Senior Leaders

For more information, contact Dinesh at +6012 985 6835 or dinesh.draj@leaderonomics.com

Date: 13th March 2017
Time: 9am to 11.30am
Venue: Cybertorium, Menara Star
15 Jalan 16/11, 48350 Petaling Jaya

To register, complete the online form at goo.gl/ByTc4K
4 SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE WHO OVERCAME HUGE AVERSITY

1. **SANDY CLARKE**
   - **Company**: Honda
   - **Role**: Founder
   - **Achievement**: Rebuilt company after its Yamashita plant in World War II was destroyed and became a major player in the car manufacturing industry.

2. **STEPHEN HAMILTON**
   - **Company**: Bolivar Mirror
   - **Role**: Publisher
   - **Achievement**: Created a newspaper in Bolivar, Tennessee, that provided workers with a stable foundation of stories about their lives, leading to improved morale and productivity.

3. **BETHANY HAMILTON**
   - **Company**: Surfing
   - **Role**: Surfer
   - **Achievement**: Became the first female professional surfer to win the World Surf League Championship and won a gold medal at the 2012 Olympics for surfboarding.

4. **HARRY SIAMOS**
   - **Company**: Aesop
   - **Role**: Founder
   - **Achievement**: Created a skincare company that began with a series of harsh, herbal-based soaps and later expanded to include a wide range of products, becoming a global leader in the natural skincare market.

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**4 CRUCIBLES OF LEADERSHIP**

**TURNING AVERSE CIRCUMSTANCES INTO FAVOURABLE MOMENTS**

**BY SANDY CLARKE**

**“Everyone is tested by life, but only a few extract strength and wisdom from their most trying experiences.”**

An AMERICAN scholar Warren Bennis and communications professor Robert Thomas are among the best known for their groundbreaking work in entrepreneurial leadership studies. In their book, *Crucible of Leadership*, they use their expertise to explore how difficult situations can turn into valuable experiences for business leaders.

In this context, a crucible moment is defined as a time of challenge when a leader is tested and must make tough decisions. These moments can be perceived as setbacks, yet they offer opportunities for growth and development.

**A founder of Honda, who was born into a working-class family and had to learn his parents' trade, is now a multimillionaire and has leveraged the web analytics company he founded into a thriving business.**

After failing his first language. After the picture, this South

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**4 REASONS LEADERS LOSE THEIR WAY**

**1. THEY BECOME IGNORANT OF THE ENVIRONMENT**
   - **Reason**: Leaders that are not fully aware of the current environment may miss important trends or changes, leading to decisions that are no longer effective.

**2. THEY GET COMPLACENT AND INSENSITIVE**
   - **Reason**: Leaders who become complacent may lose touch with their employees, leading to a decrease in motivation and productivity.

**3. THEY REMAIN RIGID TO NEW IDEAS AND ADVICE**
   - **Reason**: Leaders who resist change may fail to adapt to new technologies or market conditions, ultimately hindering their company's growth.

**4. THEY DON’T LEAVE JOB WELL**
   - **Reason**: Leaders who fail to properly transition or prepare for future leadership positions may leave their team and the company in a state of confusion or turmoil.

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**HAPPY DIGITAL LEARNING DAY!**

Effective leaders engage others in shared meaning.

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**5 ESSENTIAL SKILLS FOR EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP**

**1. COMMUNICATION**
   - Leaders should learn to mobilize their employees not just to follow them but to become inspired by their vision. This requires clear communication, both in terms of sharing goals and in providing feedback.

**2. DECISION-MAKING**
   - Leaders need to make quick and effective decisions, which requires strong judgment and the ability to weigh various options.

**3. THINKING STRATEGICALLY**
   - Leaders must think about the long-term implications of their decisions, anticipating challenges and opportunities.

**4. MENTORING AND DEVELOPMENT**
   - Leaders should invest in the development of their team, ensuring that each member has the opportunity to grow and contribute to the team's success.

**5. SELF-AWARENESS**
   - A leader who is aware of their own strengths and weaknesses can make better decisions and lead more effectively.

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The Science of Building Leaders

Leadership development is a process that can be learnt and replicated.

I
n 2001, Thar was appointed as the head of our organization, a company that I had started. Our leadership curriculum was based on the idea that leadership was something that could be taught, and Thar helped build both the program and mentorship work that formed the foundation of our leadership development program.

This led me to develop a framework of leadership development, which is the core of our leadership curriculum. The framework consists of several levels: the first level is the 'leadership journey', which is a process of growth and development; the second level is the 'leadership transformation', which focuses on making decisions and executing plans; the third level is the 'leadership impact', which focuses on creating impact and value for the organization.

The framework is based on the idea that leadership is a journey, and that leaders need to constantly be developing themselves. It is also based on the idea that leaders need to be able to make difficult decisions, and that they need to be able to execute their plans.

The framework is also based on the idea that leaders need to be able to impact the organization they work for. The framework is designed to help leaders develop the skills they need to be able to impact the organization, and to be able to create value.

The framework is also designed to help leaders develop a clear understanding of their own leadership style and abilities. The framework is based on the idea that leaders need to be able to understand their own leadership style and abilities, and to be able to develop it.

Finally, the framework is designed to help leaders develop the skills they need to be able to work with others. The framework is based on the idea that leaders need to be able to work with others, and to be able to create a successful team.

The framework is used throughout our leadership development program, and is the core of our leadership curriculum.

Leadership development is a process that can be learnt and replicated.
**Build Your Career**

**Beyond Expectations Team Advisor**

Leaderonomics is hiring five to eight people for its Beyond Expectations Team (BE Team). The BE Team is special top squad entrusted to work directly with our CEO Roshan Thiran to solve problems, identify new opportunities and to help grow us. It requires people who are agile, learn fast, are synergistic and thrive on being excellent in everything they do. Everyone from fresh grads to industry veterans can be part of this team.

To apply, you have to make a YouTube video of yourself (title of the BE Team - Leaderonomics BE Team applicant - Your Name) and tell us in the video why you believe you have what it takes to part of the elite BE squad. Email us the link of the video and also attach your resume to the message.

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**Web Developer & Strategy Adviser**

Since its launch in 2013, Leaderonomics.com has been democratising leadership knowledge by making world-class professional learning and development content available to all. This year, we continue to explore new possibilities in driving leadership at the individual and organisational level.

We’re looking for an innovative, digital-savvy web developer with a great attitude and passion for problem-solving to expand awareness and access to our multimedia library of articles, podcasts and video content.

If you have what it takes, write in to tell us about your experience in web design and strategy, and how you envision working with us to bring Leaderonomics.com and its digital assets to greater heights.

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**What's Your Life Goal? Success or Significance?**

Résumé virtues are what we write about ourselves to measure up to the world’s expectations. Eulogy virtues are what others say about us at our funeral. What kind of person we were and how we cared for others.

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**How will you measure your life?**

That’s the title of my HBS colleague clay Christensen’s latest book. Are you striving so hard to find success that you’re playing the world’s game rather than fulfilling your core desires?

If so, I encourage you to pull back and reflect on your life. Go on a spiritual retreat or start a journal. Better yet, engage a mentor, therapist, or close friend to dig deep into what’s most important to you.

This hard work, as you peel back the layers of your inner self and learn to accept yourself fully, weaknesses and all. It means digging deeply into past wounds, failures, and disappointments, and discovering what you learned about yourself that can guide you forward.

To get started, think about the end of your life and hypothesise your grand-daughter asking you, “What did you do to make a difference in the world?” What will you tell her?

The time to start acting on that is now, not then. Life beckons you. Don’t wait until it’s too late. You may discover that what’s missing in your life is not success, but significance. We only go around once in life, so we need to seek all the wonders it has to offer.
UNLEASHING YOUR POTENTIAL AS A NEW MANAGER

WHAT EVERY NEWBIE NEEDS TO LEARN AND DO TO ENSURE SUCCESS

By ERIC LAU
editor@leaderonomics.com

Scenario: What you’ve been longing for finally came to pass. Your boss announces your promotion. You are elated, overjoyed and feel like you’re on top of the world. All the years of hard work has finally paid off. You now carry a manager title on your new business card. You have inherited a few direct reports through your new managerial role.

You promise yourself that you will continue to work hard, build your career, be a good boss, lead a strong team and reach for the stars. You turn up for your first day at work as a manager. You call for a team meeting to introduce yourself to your new subordinates. You communicate your excitement of being able to work with them.

You convey that you have plans to bring the team to a new level of success. You have even decided to buy lunch hoping to score some brownie points as the new boss.

You have just begun day one as Mr or Ms New Manager.

F AST forward: It’s been 10 months since you got promoted. All’s not well. You are not meeting your KPIs. One staff member left you claiming you both have different working styles (read as he hates your guts!).

Another just tendered her resignation. The team is demotivated. Your boss is breathing down your neck. He alleges that you are underperforming. He is upset. You are demoralised. Yes, you are failing miserably as the new manager.

The reality is that the above scenario is not all that uncommon. Research conducted by the corporate executive board reveals that 65% of new managers fail within the first 24 months.

The work environment can be both complex and challenging. The fact is that most new managers are ill-equipped to face what lies ahead. Many fail to recognise that the competencies needed to be successful are different from that of an individual contributor.

Just because one is successful as an individual contributor is no guarantee that he or she will be successful in leading others. New managers need to be equipped with basic leadership skills. They need to intentionally build leadership capability and credibility in order to lead successfully. Here are three key principles for novice managers.

1. DON’T ACT LIKE A HERO

New managers are often tempted to showcase their newfound authority. They feel a need to quickly establish their position as the new boss and begin their leadership role with all guns blazing – ready to be the hero who will turn things around and bring extraordinary success. After all, they have to prove themselves – that they are worthy of this new managerial role entrusted to them. While the need to prove oneself could be a natural response, it also reveals the insecurity of the new leader.

This insecurity can subsequently lead to a fear of rejection causing the new leader to rely more on their title or position to gain control instead of using their influence.

Instead, new leaders need to approach their new positions with confidence and humility. Confidence does not mean that the new manager knows everything but having a positive self-image helps a new manager effectively handle his or her new environment.

Humility on the other hand shows others that you need them. It tells your subordinates that you don’t know everything and you are dependent on them to achieve your team goals. This powerful combination of confidence and humility will bring you far in your new leadership journey.

I intervened by meeting up with the seven team members (without the new manager) to hear their grievances. Our meeting was hostile, not towards me but towards the new leader.

All the “usual suspects” turned up. He doesn’t understand our process, what worked in his previous company doesn’t work with ours, he didn’t consult us, he thinks he is very smart, he’s using his position to push us around, and so on.

I then met the new leader privately. He too complained: These people are slow, they are not responsive, they are in their comfort zones, they are resisting change, and so on.

Hearing the undertones of what was communicated by both sides, it was clear to me that what was missing fundamentally was relational trust.

While I understand the need to drive change and I do believe it is the prerogative of any new leader to make such decisions, no effective change can take place without a healthy buy-in from others.

New managers who are wise will take time to get to know their team members first, strengthen team bonds and actively engage them in open conversations before attempting to drive any form of change. Always build relational trust first and then drive change.

2. BUILD RELATIONSHIPS FIRST, THEN DRIVE CHANGE

I was once asked to intervene in a dysfunctional team. The situation got so bad until the team members lodged a formal complaint to the senior management alleging that that their new boss – who has just taken over the reins for three months – was driving too many unnecessary changes at a rapid pace.

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3. LEARN LIKE YOUR LIFE DEPENDS ON IT

According to the human resources network HR.com, 47% of new managers receive no managerial training to prepare them for their new leadership role. No wonder the failure rate of new managers is shockingly high. While some good organisations do have new managerial preparatory training potential candidates, most organisations don’t. The new leaders are often left on their own to figure out how to lead.

A new manager should have a huge appetite to learn and empower himself or herself with the necessary mindset and skillsets to lead successfully. Your desire and capacity to learn will either make or break your leadership. Here are three practical ways to learn:

Attend training programmes: Some organisations provide training programmes for their staff. Jump into every opportunity to be in such training sessions. It’s free! And even if you have to fork out your own money to attend an external leadership programme, just do it. It’s an investment you will not regret.

Read voraciously: There are tonnes of good leadership books out there. We are shaped by what we read. Learn from the gurus. Aim to read one good book a month.

Get a mentor: Allow someone more experienced than you to speak into your life. Meet this person regularly. A mentor can open-up our minds, challenge us, provide good counsel and help us advance very quickly.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Leadership is not easy. It’s not difficult either. If you put your heart and mind to it, your leadership route will not only enrich your life but also the lives of others.

Nothing significant ever happens without leadership. To every new manager out there: leadership is a journey, not a destination. As long as you stay steadfast to excel and be hungry to learn, you will succeed.

Eric Lau is a strategic leader with a relentless belief in people. His personal mission is to inspire and influence others to rise to their full potential and call- ing. Eric is a leader- ship consultant and faculty trainer with Leaderonomics and regularly leads train- ing sessions in the areas of leadership, management and personal develop- ment.
Leading a high-growth, venture-backed startup in San Francisco's SoMa (South of Market) district for the past two years is an experience that has rocked my world. It has reminded me of everything I knew to be true about business, yet that I had somehow lost during my tenures on the enterprise world.

This second act has taught me something I never expected: love, and its crucial role in building a business. And by love, for the context of this article, I mean an intense feeling of connection.

As entrepreneurs — whether bootstrapped or venture-backed — we juggle countless difficult choices and moving parts on the road to realising our dreams. But, at the core, love is what drives us all: a feeling of connection to a mission or idea that is so strong that it inspires us to take risks and put ourselves on the line, and gives us the courage to create something from the ground up.

Let me give you an example. I was first introduced to the founders of Get Satisfaction, Thor and Amy Muller and Lane Becker, in 2009. They launched their product — a community engagement platform for companies and customers — just two years earlier with a provocative splash at a time when social businesses were just starting to emerge as fundamental to marketing, selling and servicing businesses.

I was smitten! Not just with the founders or the platform, but also with the company’s underlying philosophy and the human, open and transparent culture it fostered. This natural alignment — along with a captivating emerging-market — was a truly compelling combination and one that I was willing to throw my head and heart into. I fell in love.

To succeed as an entrepreneur, love needs to course through all the veins of your company — not just its leaders. The same passion that drove you to start must manifest itself first and foremost in your philosophy, your company culture and, importantly, in your product.

Put on your Philosopher’s Cap

The origin of the word philosophy means a love of wisdom. Applied to business, philosophy is the theory or attitude that guides behaviour for an entire organisation. More commonly, it’s your mission statement.

Get Satisfaction, for example, was founded on the Company-Customer Pact, a set of 10 guidelines that the founders put to paper in the early days.

It establishes a standard of mutual respect and aims to improve the relationships between companies and their customers, a mission all three co-founders strongly believed in.

They’re the same driving principle that guides the company till today. This driving philosophy keeps your employees coming to work every day.

At some point, we revisited the pact with the intention of updating it for today. It didn’t require a single significant edit. Four years later, the same philosophy holds true and guides the company every day.

Think about your business. How is it a deliberate extension of your broader mission, or simply an afterthought? What about your company’s mission? Is it a chain of events that happen by accident, or a true guiding belief that drives your actions?

GET CULTURED

Culture is the collection of customs, art, practices, and other manifestations of a group or company. For a textbook example of the ways in which culture can drive business success, look no further than Zappos.

Zappos knew from the start that relationships are strongest when employees talk to each other and customers, an example of the ways in which culture can drive business success.

Walk the Product Talk

The capability of any business is a product of the interaction and efforts of its employees. But how do you ensure that employees, customers and partners are all engaged and aligned?

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STAYING RELEVANT SHOULD MEAN MORE THAN A FEW YEARS

MICROSOFT’S STUNNING COMEBACK IN RECENT TIMES IS A CASE STUDY IN REINVENTION

By TOMMY WEIR
editor@leaderonomics.com

AFTER work on a Friday, I used to stop by Blockbuster and rent movies to watch later in the evening on our Sony TV while eating pizza. Inevitably while in Blockbuster, I would call my wife from my Motorola StarTac flip-phone and ask her thoughts on what movies to rent.

On Saturday mornings, I worked in the yard with my craftsman lawn-mower and tools from Sears. In the afternoons, we headed to the park and took pictures using Kodak film while eating a picnic lunch. On the way home, we’d stop by Toys “R” Us to buy something for little Emily (my eldest daughter).

Wrapping up the weekend, on Sunday evenings, I’d pull out my Dell computer to prepare for the week ahead. I think every programme that I used, including the operating system, was from Microsoft. When I got a little bored I would open Yahoo to search the net.

That was my typical weekend in the mid-1990s, which wasn’t too long ago. I couldn’t envision a future without those companies and their products. I thought I would use the cool Motorola flip-phone forever. Where else would anyone buy toys other than from Toys “R” Us?

Microsoft ran my life and work. Yet, 20 years later, they’re noticeably absent from my life. Those companies are no longer relevant to me. Yet other companies have remained an everyday part of my life for decades.

For example, I still drink Diet Coke, write with a Mont Blanc pen, almost exclusively wear Ralph Lauren clothes, wear the same type of running shoes — Nike Pegasus — albeit version 33 now. Why did some companies disappear while others stayed?

I wonder if it’s because the ones that disappeared thought like I did and failed to envision a future where they wouldn’t be relevant. Perhaps Motorola also envisioned me using their StarTac flip-phone forever. If so, they fell into the strategic trap of focusing on today’s needs and failing to anticipate the future.

Your future isn’t contained between you and your customer. Somebody else is thinking about your future differently than you are. For example, a few decades ago, Sears was the most popular retailer in the United States with claims that 75% of the United States shopped with them. Then, came along the likes of Home Depot, Toys “R” Us, Circuit City, Bed, Bath & Beyond, who took the individual departments of Sears and built competitive big-box retailers giving Sears’ customers access to a broader product line.

Sears and the customers saw the same future, until someone else showed them a different and better version of it. When you get to the top, it’s daunting to stay there. You also need to watch out for the other trap, the psychological trap of fixating on what made you successful. Not only are the familiar words “what got you here, won’t get you there” unheeded, what got you here, won’t even keep you here.

You can’t keep doing more of the same — worse than stagnating your progress, you’ll slide backwards. To remain relevant, you must reinvent. Proactively reinventing yourself is the key to avoiding a tailspin and losing market share. That is exactly how Microsoft became hot again with a market cap topping US$500bil, the highest it’s been in 17 years.

This point is equally poignant for you personally. Great leaders know that in addition to reinventing their companies’ products and services they also need to reinvent themselves personally. You need to become relevant to your company’s future, not just to today’s work.

Most of us have a tendency towards illusory superiority — the belief that we are above average in our abilities, even though all of us can’t possibly be. This psychological trap is like a bear trap clamping down on your growth.

Reinvention is more than making small, incremental tweaks, it’s changing so much that you appear to be entirely new.

Ask yourself, “How can I be reinvented?” “How can I be much better?” You will be amazed at the things you can do by having a reinvent mindset. Don’t stumble and lose your future edge like the innovative companies that defined my life in the 90s did. Watch for — and avoid — the strategic and psychological traps. Remain continually relevant by reinventing yourself.

Tommy Weir is a CEO coach, author, speaker and advisor who believes in helping good leaders become great! To engage with him, e-mail us at editor@leaderonomics.com

7 WAYS TO DEAL WITH THE LIES LEADERS TELL THEMSELVES

By DAN ROCKWELL
editor@leaderonomics.com

WHEN you screw up, someone didn’t follow through. When others screw up, they procrastinated. It’s not if, but how you lie to yourself.

You fail because of circumstances. Others fail because of character. They lack initiative. They don’t have what it takes.

WHEN LEADERS TELL THEMSELVES, THEY:
1. Affirm themselves
2. Disaffirm others
3. Close minds
4. Live with blindspots
5. Strain relationships
6. Disconnect
7. Demotivate teams

The lies we believe about ourselves cause us to deny the obvious and defend the ridiculous.

7 LIES YOU MAY BELIEVE ABOUT YOURSELF:
1. Everyone else is over it because you’re over it. This morning’s emotional outburst is ancient history.
2. Your team loves it when you tweak their work.
3. Others don’t see your weaknesses.
4. If you put your hands over your eyes, that nagging problem will eventually disappear.
5. You’re a good listener.
6. You don’t have a problem with arrogance.
7. Your way is the best way.

7 WAYS TO DEAL WITH THE LIES YOU TELL YOURSELF:
1. Ask for suggestions when someone points out something you don’t see in yourself. “What suggestions do you have for me, with this shortcoming in mind?”
2. Listen for excuses and blaming in your language. What comes after, “That’s because?” Is it someone else or are you taking responsibility?
3. Just believe that we all lie to ourselves.
4. Lean toward agreement. Whisper in your own ear, “They could be right.”
5. Connect with an honest mentor, coach, or adviser.
6. Invite people to point out blindspots in the moment. “Tell me right when you see it. Don’t wait until next week.”
7. Say, “Thank you,” when you hear something that doesn’t align with your self-perception. “Go with” before pushing back.

What lies do leaders tell themselves?

How might we deal with our tendency to tell ourselves lies?

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For an organisation to thrive and lead, it takes a holistic ecosystem to identify, nurture and accelerate the development of leadership among their talent. That is why Leaderonomics’ first priority is to get to know your organisation and its people deeply, and to identify their needs. Our Organisational Diagnostic team is equipped with the heart and knowledge to hear you out and work with you to diagnose the root causes of internal challenges.

Designed with deep knowledge of workplace psychology and adult learning, our customised solutions are developed to deliver the best possible results for your organisation.

Get in touch with us for a free consultation to explore how we can work with you on people-centred solutions that deliver business results:

- Employee Development Initiatives
- Learning Calendars
- Experiential Simulations
- Digital Learning
- High Potential Talent Acceleration
- Strategic Reviews
- Culture and Employee Engagement

Email info@leaderonomics.com to schedule a free consultation.