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HAVE you ever watched a game of bull-leaping? You know, the sporting event where girls (painted white) grip the horns of a bull while trying to catch the boys (painted red) who acrobatically leap over the bull? What about the Mexican sport *llamaliztli*? It's like racquetball except it ends with a player being sacrificed on the temple's altar.

These sports, amongst hundreds of others, no longer exist. In Minoan Crete and Aztec Mexico, respectively, they were a cornerstone of their culture, but an inability to remain current expunged them to the point where historians are only scarcely aware of their existence today and no one has the knowledge necessary to accurately re-enact the game.

While there is no need to long for the days of ritualistically executing athletes, it is worth considering how we can learn from these all-but-forgotten sports to ensure that our organisations and well-constructed cultures avoid falling into obscurity.

The Olympics is one of the few internationally embraced sporting events. People like to taut its long, illustrious history, but besides the name and four-year frequency, it bears little resemblance to its Greek origins.

Until it was revived in the 1890s, the Olympics had not been held for 1,500 years. Once resumed, the Olympic committee discarded a few of the more archaic rules.

They invited the whole world to participate (versus just the Greeks), women were welcome (versus holding their own event), athletes wore clothes (versus competing naked), races were now timed (versus just marking the winner), and they standardised the distances of races (versus changing topographies and venues).

Those in charge of the Olympics did not just modernise it by a millennium; they set a precedent where events can change or be discarded. At one time, Tug of War was a major draw. There were also swimming obstacle races, solo synchronised swimming, and ski ballet.

The Olympics are not the only ones updating their regimes. Before every season, *Major League Baseball* rolls out new regulations. This year, they set a time limit on how long the manager and

IS YOUR CULTURE AT RISK OF EXTINCTION?

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT TO STAY CURRENT

pitcher can gather at the mound during a game, and limited breaks between innings to 2½ minutes.

The *National Football League* also initiates annual updates, sometimes by choice and other times due to public shaming. For instance, during a public relations nightmare, they instituted additional precautions to protect the physical health of their players.

Independent certified athletic trainers have been designated to notify game officials to stop the game if a player exhibits signs of disorientation, and have that player evaluated by the medical staff.

The athletics of yesteryear show us what can happen when we don't remain current. Until they vanished, these sports were played for hundreds of years.

They were heavily entwined with religious rituals and were at the core of their society. In their heyday, no one could have ever suspected that they would no longer exist.

Your culture is just as susceptible. How many companies dominated their industry and are now disregarded? Remember Pan Am Airlines? Tower Records? Circuit City? Blockbuster Video? Like the extinct sports, these companies were going to be around forever... until they weren't.

Take a page from the Olympics, don't be afraid to discard practices that are no longer anticipated. Learn from *Major League Baseball*, adapt to meet the changing needs of your customers and staff.

And follow the *National Football League*, be mindful of changes in social mores so your culture remains current. The other option is to dig in your heels, but that will just make you yesterday's Fox Tossler (a 17th century competition to see who could throw a fox the highest).



Change initiatives can be overwhelming. Worse, it may face indigestion. Understand the roles of leaders in initiating, facilitating, implementing and internalising change. Let Leaderonomics help your organisation be agile. Contact training@leaderonomics.com for details.

■ *David Kahn, PhD is a leadership strategist focused on delivering business solutions that link workforce strategies, culture and engagement with the business goals of the organisation. Check out his latest book, "Case, Spandex, Briefcase: Leadership Lessons from Superheroes" and read more of his articles on www.leaderonomics.com*

By **TAMARA JAYNE**
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LEADERS are often criticised when they make mistakes. What if we are, in fact, "right" all the time? Leadership is the easiest role to have after all. Here are the top 10 leadership skills you need to ensure that you are the best leader your team and company ever had...

1 You are always right, because you say so

You're the CEO, manager or a department head at the company. You obviously know what's best for the organisation. Who needs additional input or ideas? All you need is to believe that you know everything, and you will.

2 Tell people what to do

As a leader, all you need to do is to tell others what they should and should not be doing, without any justification. And if they ask "Why?", reply by saying "Because I know better." That should shut them up. Everyone likes to be told what to do, anyway. Right?

LIKE A BOSS: HOW TO GET THINGS DONE

3 Don't be afraid to say sorry

Do what you think is right. When others disagree, just say sorry. Make sure you say it in a genuine manner, lest they find out that you don't really mean it at all. Insincerity, is after all, the quickest way to the top.

4 Only listen to things you want to hear

Promote those who constantly agree with everything you have to say. Hire people who you can synergise with. If they challenge you, make them see why they are wrong and you are right. You don't need that kind of negativity in your life. Plus, it keeps you motivated!

5 Don't get your hands dirty

That's why you hired your team, right? It is their job to get things done and report to you. All you need to do is dictate how it should be done. That's a sure-fire way to get you the admiration you deserve.

6 Have undying commitment

Commitment is your middle-name; even at 3am, when your boss is expect-

ing an e-mail response or that project outline. If you are expecting to soar in your career, you need to sacrifice your sleep, family, friends, meals, toilet breaks and vacations. Commitment is a big responsibility and a good leader will never let anything distract him or her from that quality.

7 Pass on the blame

It's never your fault. A good leader will never admit that he made a mistake. Why should you take the blame, when you are always right at the end of the day? It's all about YOU when it comes to leadership. *Refer to point 1.

8 Hold long meetings

You need to "interact" with your team. Studies show the more you interact, the more your team will be engaged. So, call for meetings that can last for half a day. Talk about anything and everything. Who needs an agenda when everything is in your mind? Boost productivity and motivate your team with this method because, hey,

no one can turn around and say your team is disengaged this way.

9 Take all the credit

You deserve it. You worked so hard in leading your team to do your work for you. If you hadn't, no work would have been completed. So yes, take pride in your leadership skills and take all the credit.

10 Intervene

Stick your head (and hands and, occasionally, toes) into every project and ensure that every decision goes through you. Trusting a team only leads to further problems. You know exactly what you want and how to get it, and communicating that to your team requires a lot of work because they may or may not understand you.

Nail these 10 points and you will discover how easy it is to be a leader! Have a great April Fool's Day!

■ *Tamara is an assistant editor and writer with Leaderonomics. She loves changing her colleagues' desktop wallpaper when they leave their laptop unattended.*

