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INDUSTRY 4.0
HOW TO KEEP PACE WITH TECHNOLOGY

5 HRDF CHIEF: WORK HARD AND LISTEN TO YOUR PEOPLE

6 TOP INDUSTRY TRENDS EVERY MALAYSIAN SHOULD KNOW

9 PREPARING TO SNAG JOBS THAT DON’T EXIST YET

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We can help tell your organisational story to the world. For more information, please contact us at editor@leaderonomics.com or call us at +603 7957 5809/5864.

**Editor’s Note**

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**Are We Ready for the Careers of the Future?**

Jack Welch

“Change before you have to.”

—Jack Welch

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In today’s employment landscape, more employees have the flexibility to perform their tasks from wherever they are.

This means that, at some point in the past, the traditional workforce has had to embrace new tools that made way for greater productivity and results for the organisations they worked for.

Rapid technological advancements – especially in mobile internet, cloud technology, big data and crowdsourcing – have reconfigured the traditional workforce, placing in limbo the future of those who refuse to update their skills.

And this, has transformed the employment and economic landscapes of countries across the globe.

The main socio-economic drivers of this change is flexible working arrangements, according to a 2016 World Economic Forum report titled ‘Future of Jobs’.

The global workforce is already experiencing the benefits – and setbacks – of this factor, as it continues to enable remote working, co-working spaces and teleconferencing.

Without the need to employ a large group of full-time employees, organisations are now able to choose from a larger pool of skilled independent contributors who are able to fulfill the functions of the job or project.

And while new jobs and job arrangements are being created, the traditional workforce is disrupted, putting people at risk of job displacement.

More importantly, it is the drivers of the near future – between 2018 and 2020 – that we should look out for:

1. Advanced robotics and autonomous transport; artificial intelligence and machine learning; biotechnology and genomics.
2. The in-demand skills of the future – such as an understanding of the six hottest fields of the year: biotechnology, genomics, artificial intelligence and machine learning; big data and crowdsourcing.

In this week’s centrefeed, Leaderonomics President Prof Thirisa Esvary takes a deep dive into what it takes to keep up with technological changes, and stay employable.

She talks to Manpower Group Malaysia and Robert Walters Malaysia on the six hottest fields of the year; industries that will continue to see demand – and those that will likely disappear – by 2025.

On Page 9, find out how we can stay relevant and prepared for the upcoming wave of change that is about to hit the workforce.

Here, Laurent Haug tells us that while automation gains ground, human beings actually have the advantage of reinforcing unique human skills that cannot be replicated by machines.

Effective communication is one of these skills, and chief executive of the Human Resources Development Fund (HRDF) Datuk CM Vignaesvaran Jeyandran talks about how leaders must spend some time each day just talking to employees and learning what they can do.

Lydia Gomez

Editor

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For other great leadership insights, including those by John Maxwell, visit www.leaderonomics.com. If you missed any of our past issues, go to www.leaderonomics.com/publications and download for FREE!
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LOOK at the black and white image. Do you see horizontal lines that are straight or lines that are sloping?

In all the years that I have been in leadership roles in Europe, the United States and Asia, it never fails to amaze me how people can look at exactly the same reality and come to totally different conclusions. A few years ago, I was teaching at an IMD leadership programme in Europe where I shared some of my life experiences at General Electric. I could not believe the reaction to the same sharing. The Asian participants took a given that great organisations push and “force” employees through tough challenges and experiences; some Western Europeans were flabbergasted and upset — how dare a company push an employee so hard; others from the United States and Britain, found it refreshing to learn how development works. Same sharing, but completely different interpretations of its meaning.

When it comes to leadership, a critical quality for a leader to possess is the ability to agree to concessions when needed; to build trust and rapport by finding common ground through appreciating — and understanding — different perspectives to their own.

But to communicate effectively means that we listen to hear; hear to understand; and understand to learn what the other person is trying to tell us and why.

No doubt most of us would have experienced a stand-off, where we’re absolutely sure of the best course of action to take, or how a particular account unfolded; fighting in the opposite corner is a colleague whose views are rigidly set against our own and, usually, what transpires is that each side digs their heels in further, refusing to give an inch. I have had the privilege of working with people who help us most along the way.

As a CEO, part of your challenge is to be able to scale and continually grow your business. Many CEOs struggle to reinvent themselves at different phases of their leadership journey and this translates to an inability to grow their own businesses and organisations. CEO’s often face significant challenges with little support or people to talk about their struggles and pains.

In 2016, Leaderonomics, together with the Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC), pioneered the Leadership Dojo programme specifically designed for CEOs to learn from CEOs, senior CEO mentors and from global leaders who have succeeded in their respective journeys.

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If you are a CEO who is looking for a programme to help you grow in your leadership journey and enable your business to scale to the next level, do register your interest for the 2017 intake by scanning the QR code or directing your browser to bit.ly/LDjointerest.
AND YOU WILL.

If you are 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?

1. You are always right, because you say so. 
2. Tell people what to do. 
3. Don't be afraid to say sorry. 
4. Only listen to things you want to hear. 
5. Don't get your hands dirty. 
6. Have undying commitment. 
7. Pass on the blame. 
8. Hold long meetings. 
9. Take all the credit. 
10. Intervene.

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

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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 leader- ship skills you need to ensure that you are the best leader your team and company ever had...

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WORK HARD AND LISTEN TO YOUR PEOPLE

THE LEADERONOMICS SHOW CATCHES UP WITH HRDF CHIEF EXECUTIVE DATUK VIGNAESVARAN JEYANDAN

Vignaesvaran (left) with Leaderonomics CEO Roshan Thiran on The Leaderonomics Show. Pic by Farinah Harith/LEADERONOMICS

By MATT NAYLOR
matt.naylor@leaderonomics.com

With a constant stream of work demands coming through daily and yet only so many available hours in a day, top executives in today’s business environment may well feel they are under a perpetual time crunch.

Rather than being a reason for not spending time with one’s employees, however, this scenario renders internal communications even more critical than ever. At least, that’s the opinion of Datuk CM Vignaesvaran Jeyandran, chief executive of the Human Resources Development Fund (HRDF).

As head of the chief human capital development authority in Malaysia, Vignaesvaran, known affectionately to his associates and staff as “Datuk Vicks”, has liaised with and trained talent at some of the biggest and brightest organisations in the country. He understands the key challenges facing today’s industry leaders better than most.

In a chat with Leaderonomics CEO Roshan Thiran on the latest episode of The Leaderonomics Show, the affable Vignaesvaran spoke at length about his journey to HRDF and shared a few insights he’s gained on today’s corporate environment.

“As a CEO, our time is very limited. Most of the time, you’ll be out and about. But although you may be one resource on your own, as leader of an organisation you represent a team comprising hundreds of resources.”

“I always make sure to spend some of my working time talking to my staff. It could be a simple chat or it could be a serious discussion. It could even be a simple talk about what kind of hobbies each employee can offer. Apart from just making decisions and handling business matters, spend some time each day talking to your employees and learning what they can do.”

FROM SELLING NASI Lemak TO TRANSFORMING THE NATION

Vignaesvaran’s humble upbringing instilled in him a stern work ethic from an early age. His father ran a small nasi lemak and roti canai stall catering to the early morning breakfast crowd.

Having to wake updaily at four in the morning to help his father run the stall before going to school, then returning from a day of studies to help close the eatery in the evening, there was very little downtime for young Vignaesvaran.

“Any time I wasn’t in school, I was helping my father run his stall,” he recalls. Rather than looking forward to holidays such as Chinese New Year and Hari Raya, he dreaded these “busiest times” of the year.

“During the school holidays, while all of my friends and classmates were out playing, I would be at work,” he says. “It was a lonely existence at times, but it taught me the fundamentalsof business from an early age.”

The sacrifices he made also paid off for the family business. Vignaesvaran’s father would later expand the stall into a restaurant and, ultimately, a chain of outlets. It was at his next two jobs, however, that Vignaesvaran would learn the life lessons that undergirded his leadership approach to this day.

TURNING CHALLENGES AROUND

While working for his millionaire uncle’s construction company, Vignaesvaran looked to his uncle as a role model of a successful businessman and enjoyed the time sat under his learning tree. When his uncle and his company went dramatically and suddenly bankrupt, Vignaesvaran saw that nothing in business is assured and that failure can come about when we least expect it.

Moving on to a new line of work, Vignaesvaran decided to join the sales line and began selling photocyclers for a firm. For the first three months, he sold zero copiers, an experience he describes as “extremely embarrassing”.

At this point, he was thrown a bone by a colleague, who passed one of his sales leads to the increasingly demoralised man. Two weeks later, he had sold 40 copiers.

That one simple gesture extended to Vignaesvaran by a co-worker provided so much more than just building his confidence in selling copying machines. It vividly demonstrated for him the immense value of collaboration, which he continues to promote in his work to this day.

From there, Vignaesvaran moved to the then-fledgling JobStreet, where he was given a budget of zero ringgit to get the company’s marketing initiatives off the ground. Thinking on his feet and outside the box, he orchestrated bartering arrangements with various companies and eventually ran more than 40 events within a single calendar year, all without a sen of backing from his side.

SWALLOW YOUR PRIDE, MILLENNIALS

Vignaesvaran’s counsel for fresh graduates entering the corporate world is evidently shaped by his own formative experiences.

While his take on the challenges faced by millennials and Generation Z entering the workplace may seem hard nosed, he maintains that it was only by stepping beyond his predefined job scope that he learnt his most valuable lessons in work and life.

Vignaesvaran’s advice, in a nutshell?

“Swallow your pride.

“When your boss gives you something to do, just do it,” he says.

“Don’t complain about being over-worked and stuff like that because every single job that you get is actually a learning curve for you to ascend. That’s how I learnt a lot of the things that I apply in my work today. If I looked at the task and only did what was in my job description I would never have learnt a lot of new skills.

“I know that you have a university education and that’s fantastic, but swallow your pride. When you come out and enter the workplace, it is a different reality.”

LIFE AS A BOSS

Upon moving into HRDF seven years ago, Vignaesvaran steadily worked his way up the ranks to his current position a chief executive, developing his own distinctive style of leadership as he interacted with a diverse range of business leaders along the way.

On his first day in the biggest seat at HRDF, he focused on establishing one key value: democracy. Calling a “town-hall” meeting with the entire staff of HRDF, he encouraged everyone there to share ideas about the kind of changes that they wanted to see under his leadership.

Apart from just making decisions and handling business matters, spend some time each day talking to your employees and learning what they can do.”

Out of this came two new policies introduced internally to improve morale among the workforce. Dress-down Fridays and the adoption of a healthier lifestyle at work through initiatives such as fruit platters around the office and subsidised gym memberships.

Externally, HRDF has since launched a host of new workforce development initiatives with a stronger focus on team-building exercises in addition to just competency-based training.

As he leads HRDF in shaping the future of Malaysia’s human potential by working with almost 18,000 companies across the nation, Vignaesvaran continues to draw inspiration from those who mentored him along the way.

“Sometimes I really picked up from Mark Chang (of LogiStreet) is how to be humble no matter how successful you become,” he says.

“It was a different kind of boss, one who interacts very well with his staff. I think, in his mind, we are all his friends who work for him. Now, I do the same with my employees and always encourage them to speak up.”

At the end of the day, Vignaesvaran is as comfortable holding his own among the nation’s lawmakers during a parliamentary session as he is joking about returning to his roots with a pit stop at the nearest roti canai stall.

“When you know how far your own grit and determination has brought you, there is no fear of starting anew, even from ground zero, and raising others up along with you.”

WHAT DOES THE REVISED PSMB ACT MEAN FOR COMPANIES IN MALAYSIA?

Effective today, the PSMB Act 2001 is being expanded to cover even more subsectors of the manufacturing, service, mining and quarrying sectors. About 17 new subsectors are now eligible for HRDF-reclamable training schemes, bringing the total to 63 industries covered.

The increased scope of the act is in line with HRDF’s goal to bring the number of employees eligible for training schemes up from the current 1.77 million to 2.8 million by 2020, a target which Vignaesvaran believes it is on course to achieve.

All current eligible subsectors will be unaffected. To check on your company’s eligibility under the revised act, visit hrdf.com.my
The Next 30 Years Are Critical for the World.

THOSE were the words delivered by Jack Ma, founder of Alibaba Group, at a seminar on Innovation and Human Capital in the ASEAN region, during a recent state visit to Malaysia. The Chinese internet tycoon referred to the Fourth Industrial Revolution – also known as Industry 4.0 — that is transforming the way business is conducted.

‘Shaping the future’ is indeed what we need to do if the world is to embrace the implications of this transformation over the next 30 years. As more data and technological advancements are adopted, businesses will need to upskill their workforce to adapt to the rapidly changing business landscape.

By PRITHVIBH SIVAB

Malaysians need to get ready to embrace new technologies that bring about the fourth industrial revolution. To ensure that they are ready, they should embrace critical thinking and continuous learning. But what are the new industries that will equip your team for the future?

Top Trends Impacting Industries

Mobile internet, cloud technology

Changing nature of work, flexible work

Processing power, Big Data

New energy supplies and technologies

Cloud-class in emerging markets

Climate change, natural resources

Geopolitical instability

Consumer ethics, privacy issues

Top Industries in 2017

International Trade

In choosing the industries, we refer to the future trends discussed by PwC in its 2017 Global Economic Outlook report and approaches local recruitment practices in Malaysia.

1. Trade

According to the World Trade Organization (WTO), goods trade makes up 70% of the population, and this is partly due to an increased effort in pushing for online businesses. This trend is growing at a fast pace due to the introduction of digital technology, the Internet and renewable energies. The introduction of digital technology, the Internet and renewable energies will continue to grow, as Malaysia is strategically positioned as an Internet gateway to the Western hemisphere.

2. Sales and marketing

Sales and marketing has always been a top priority for organizations. According to Robert Walters Malaysia, job openings are wide open, and these are not going to be filled in the near future.

3. Consumer Goods

Wages in sales jobs offered by Robert Walters Malaysia, say "One thing that is certain is the demand for good sales or good talent is very good, but it is the hiring of salespeople because when the end of the day you need them to push products out. Whereas for an operational role you can maybe get someone to double-batch or refines if the numbers are not going right."

4. Finance and IT professionals

According to a survey conducted by Robert Walters Malaysia, in 2015, job openings were wide open, and these are not going to be filled in the near future.

The Future of Jobs

In its Future of Jobs report, characterising Industry 4.0, the World Economic Forum (WEF) has identified 19 job families and 202 distinct jobs that will be impacted by emerging trends. The report and approach local recruitment practices in Malaysia.

1. Finance and IT professionals

One of the sectors that are expected to grow by 34% this year to US$3.8bil, according to PwC Malaysia, is the financial sector. Robust financial sectors are expected to continue to grow, as Malaysia is strategically positioned as an Internet gateway to the Western hemisphere.

2. Sales and marketing

This is not news to us Malaysians; it is expected that job openings will continue to grow, as Malaysia is strategically positioned as an Internet gateway to the Western hemisphere.

3. Consumer Goods

According to PwC Malaysia’s report, the sales and marketing sector is expected to continue to grow, as Malaysia is strategically positioned as an Internet gateway to the Western hemisphere.

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OF MILLENNIALS, DIVERSITY AND THE COLLABORATIVE LEADER

DIVERSITY: ARE WE DOING IT BECAUSE IT IS A FAD?

By STEPHANIE LING
editor@leaderonomics.com

WHILE in a Monday lecture, my lecturer poses the question, “What comes to mind when I say diversity?”

Holding in a chuckle, my first thought was that of a generic university brochure showing a group of multiracial students seated together in a park on a sunny day. Ironically, having been in Sheffield for the past year, the sun rarely makes an appearance, if at all. However, in all seriousness, is diversity being implemented in businesses because it is the right thing to do, or is it merely because it is a fad?

In recent years, businesses have been seen to emphasise workplace diversity with it being more quota-dependant rather than contribution-dependant. That being said, it is likely that more women are hired merely to reflect a more diverse workforce but this still differs greatly across industries and companies.

This emphasis on workplace diversity could also be attributed to the very public cases of discrimination we see in the media.

A high-profile case that garnered massive media attention was that of Merrill Lynch in 2013. Merrill Lynch, one of the largest brokerage firms on Wall Street, settled a racial bias lawsuit that amounted to US$660m in losses. This did not even include resources lost in terms of time, emotional distress and professional standing.

DIVERSITY VS INCLUSION
Diversity and inclusion are phrases that go hand-in-hand, and organisations need both in order to succeed.

Diversity would reflect the ways in which individuals differ. Inclusion involves the harnessing of these diverse resources. In other words, diversity is when you’ve been invited to a party, while inclusion is the invitation for you to have cake at that party.

Businesses that embrace diversity are said to be better equipped to remain competitive and current in the modern workforce.

Diversity is when you’ve been invited to a party, while inclusion is the invitation for you to have cake at that party.

In a diverse team, individuals with varied talents and backgrounds work together towards a common goal. With so many diverse minds coming together, more heterogeneous solutions and ideas will be brought to the table, and this plays a role in increasing creativity and problem solving abilities.

Besides that, a diverse team will more likely encourage dissent among its members, which discourages groupthink in the process. Diversity accounts for nothing when inclusion is not the end goal, and that is why most diversity programmes are not actually increasing diversity.

A 2009 article in the Annual Review of Psychology that looked at various reports on reducing prejudice through diversity training showed that these trainings did not bring about lasting effects.

This was attributed to the fact that diversity training tends to favour negative reinforcement. With that, it focuses on the negative implications of discrimination rather than the potential positive implication – if practiced.

As such, people often feel that it is something that is implemented for the sake of it and are unaware of its latent potential to enable individual, as well as organisational, growth.

The 21st century no longer subscribes to the practices of a nine-to-five job with stringent work settings. This is the new world of work and you best be ready for this change or you are already too late.

New forms of leadership are beginning to emerge as workers seek more independence — and engagement — in their work.

A collaborative environment encourages inventive and pioneering habits; collaborative leadership, meanwhile, is powered by the collective team.

Millenials and Leadership
Millenials — also known as Generation Y — are those born between 1981 and 1997. Generation Y, with myself included, has been labelled a bunch of lazy, entitled and compulsive job hoppers, and on a personal note, I feel offended.

It is naïve to assume that the workforce remains the same despite advancement in technology and globalisation. Take a minute and look around you. Today you split your work between this desk, your client’s desk and if you’re lucky, even from the comfort of your own bed. Your meeting scheduled for this afternoon will be on Skype, seeing as how your manager is based across the globe.

It is naïve to assume that the workforce remains the same despite advancement in technology and globalisation.

The collaborative leader encourages team work among colleagues in sharing information, resources, time and effort.

By pushing for equal input from across and within levels, collaborative leaders take the team approach to problem solving, having acquired solutions from all parties. The collaborative leader does not depend on power play whereby information is closely held by those at the top of the food chain.

Instead, they work on brainstorming, and being open to opinions from everyone. Besides that, collaborative leaders encourage teamwork among colleagues in sharing information, resources, time and effort.

This provides employees the fluidity to develop their roles and responsibilities if it is aligned with organisational goals. Traditionally, hierarchy binds workers to their roles and responsibilities tightly, and that in turn, limits teamwork and creativity.

Transformational leadership has undoubtedly reigned supreme as one of the most progressive forms of leadership, with the likes of Barrack Obama and Sri Richard Branson as examples.

Their inspiring visions and focus on their people have helped in achieving their goals and dreams. On the flipside, transformational leadership has also been likened to a cult, as followers may be blindly following a leader due to his or her charisma and visions, with the likes of Adolf Hitler as an example.

Rather than trying to change the incoming workforce, it is essential to embrace necessary changes and prepare for it. In understanding what your company stands for, you will be better equipped to implement changes in leadership and training for inclusion.
HOW DO YOU GET A JOB THAT DOESN'T EXIST YET?

STAYING RELEVANT AND PREPARED FOR THE WORK OF THE FUTURE

By LAURENT HAUG
editor@leaderonomics.com

I t’s almost impossible to anticipate which occupations will thrive in years to come. The parents of today’s social media managers and search engine evaluators couldn’t possibly have known those roles would exist when they were helping their children decide which subjects to study at school.

So how do we prepare for jobs that don’t yet exist?

As a legendary hockey player once said: success comes not from skating to where the puck is, but to where it will be. The following high-level trends can give us an idea of where to focus our attention.

SHOCK OF THE NEW

Jobs are becoming more abstract. As we spend more time in the virtual digital world, we see more new occupations arising. Making, creating and operating those very digital platforms, for one, is a new job prospect.

While ecosystems are also emerging. Advertising on Google used to be something a small business owner could do herself, but has now become so complex and specialised that millions of consultants and specialists that millions of consultants need to come up with ideas for improvement.

At the same time, there’s a movement in the opposite direction, towards the tangible and authentic. The food industry is abuzz with enterprises that exotil the virtues of local, seasonal, farm-to-table products and services – among them pop-up restaurants, street-food trucks, microbreweries, urban farms and cooperatives are making good money. Much like the Arts and Crafts movement, born as a reaction to industrialisation in the 19th century, the resurgence of artisanal, “old world” values signals not only a nostalgic desire for handcrafted goods, but a desire for a different model of social and economic progress.

FROM MAN OR TO MACHINE

No one really knows which jobs will be automated in the future. But one thing is clear: as machines become more pervasive, so too do the humans who teach and interact with them.

As we’ve already seen in the airline business, autopilot didn’t put pilots out of a job; instead it foreshadowed an increasing collaboration between human and machine on complex tasks.

As automation gains ground, the human workforce has the intriguing possibility of further developing uniquely human skills that machines cannot match or replicate. In an unusual twist on industry practice, automotive giant Toyota is removing robots from its factories because human workers can, unlike their machine counterparts, propose ideas for improvement.

Machines, it seems, are not very good with innovation. They’re not very good at certain types of agility, either. Watch Persian waiters in action and ask yourself how long it would take for robots to put them out of a job.

Then there’s empathy, creativity, leadership, intuition and social intelligence, if I were to give younger people an idea of the skills they’ll need, these would be on the list, as well as advice to pay attention to how machines function and think.

A piece of wisdom I gleaned from the father of a friend who once fled from the USSR was: “Learn your enemy’s language.” If machines are coming for us we need to understand how they function.

LESIONS FROM HISTORY

The problem with the changing world of work is not so much the loss of opportunities as the period of transition. A few years ago, I sat down with the CEO of a 40,000-people company and asked him to list the skills he thought would be needed in a digital, data-driven future. He mentioned programmers, designers and online marketing specialists. I then asked him to list the skills his company had on the payroll. The difference was painfully obvious.

For those whose training is becoming obsolete, and organisations needing completely new skills in a short amount of time, the transition will be complicated. As the author Alvin Toffler once predicted, the future belongs to those who can unlearn and relearn.

History tells us that technology creates more opportunities and jobs. The state of the world might look confusing and worrying, but it is not. Virtual or tangible, automated or humanised, work is changing in many ways, but the fundamentals remain: acquiring skills and doing things that people need.

Skating to where the puck will be is much easier than it seems, as long as you stick to a few basic rules: being curious, open, and ready to experiment and to follow the direction the world is moving in.

REBECCA MORGAN

24–26 MAY 2017

KUALA LUMPUR

International Certified Speaking Professional, Certified Management Consultant, Trainer

“Thank you for the time and ingenuity you dedicated to planning and delivering your presentation. It was a great pleasure to see your enthusiasm, intelligence, and willingness to share knowledge. We can’t say thank you enough for your hard work, your flexibility and your poise.”

– Dzmitry Bazhko, Presentations Manager, Airbnb

Rebecca specialises in creating innovative solutions for workplace effectiveness challenges. She has appeared on 60 Minutes, Oprah, the Wall Street Journal, National Public Radio, and Forbes.com, as well as international media such as the Straits Times, Brunei Times, and The Star (Malaysia). Rebecca is the bestselling author of 25 books, including Grow Your Key Talent, Remarkable Customer Service and Disservice, and Professional Selling.

Work, Play, Give | Influencing Others When You’re Not Their Boss | Influencing Without Authority Becoming an Authentic Leader | The Power of Our Words | Effectively Growing Your Key Talent

Engage Rebecca Morgan to speak at your organisation. Register your interest at bit.ly/RMorganKL or call +6012-985 6835

A global perspective: job families in decline and on the rise

Source: Future of Jobs Report, World Economic Forum

compounded growth rate, 2015–2020 %

-6 -4 -2 0 2 4 6

Architectural and Engineering
Computer and Mathematical
Management
Business and Financial Operations
Sales and Related
Installation and Maintenance
Construction and Extraction
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports and Media
Manufacturing and Production
Office and Administrative

No one really knows which jobs will be automated in the future. But one thing is clear: as machines become more pervasive, so too do the humans who teach and interact with them... Learn your enemy’s language. If machines are coming for us we need to understand how they function.
How ECM Libra Foundation aims to get kids to stay in– and finish – school

Kalimullah: “I grew up in a poor family and I understand the situation.” Pic by Farha Harith/LEADERONOMICS

By LYDIA GOMEZ and TAMARA JAYNE 
editor@leaderonomics.com

EduCATION – or school – has long been spelled out as a cornerstone of success. While people from various walks of life know this to be true, there are communities that still struggle with fluctuating school registration and retention rates. A 2013 survey conducted by the Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs (IDEAS) revealed that thousands of children were unable to complete their secondary or tertiary education in Malaysia due to a few common reasons: the lack of interest in schooling, along with the inability of families to afford school expenses.

A majority of these students were revealed to be from lower-income households – one of the factors found to perpetuate the dropout cycle. Several initiatives exist to break this cycle. Among them is the ECM Libra Foundation’s “Stay-In-School” programme. This project provides opportunities for youths to remain in school or university until they complete their education.

Driven by the need to help as many Malaysian children as possible through education, the foundation has partnered with local community leaders, non-governmental organisations as well as individuals in their quest to make a difference.

Small steps, big difference

By running their programmes, ECM Libra Foundation hopes to make a lasting difference. Even if through seemingly small acts, the foundation – which started 12 years ago – believes its efforts would add up to create big changes in the lives of children and youth who come from a disadvantaged socio-economic status.

Datuk Seri Kalimullah Hashim, chairman of ECM Libra Foundation and ECM Libra Financial Group, is passionate about giving Malaysian children from less fortunate backgrounds the opportunity to dream big, and realise why it matters to give.

And while giving top achievers among the beneficiaries would be a glorious achievement for the work that the foundation does, Kalimullah states that the real aim of this foundation was to equip, and provide as many Malaysian children as possible the opportunity to break out of the poverty cycle.

I grew up in a poor family and I understand the situation of many of the children in our programmes. We want them to have that opportunity and to make the most out of it,” he told Leaderonomics recently. “This is the chance for us to make sure they get their basics right, at the very least. If we can provide the opportunities for them to complete their education and become gainfully employed, they can go back to help their families. That’s our objective,” said Kalimullah.

The foundation aids beneficiaries by:
1. Giving grants to schools and communities (e.g. for purchase of computers, libraries, school uniforms, bags and shoes)
2. Offering interest and bond-free study loans to students who want to pursue their tertiary education in Malaysia.
3. Sponsoring teaching programmes such as tuition classes, pre-school programmes and skills training for youths in rural areas.

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The loans that they repay are interest free – it is simply to give them a sense of responsibility and dignity. That money doesn’t come back to us, it goes back to others, through the other programmes and initiatives that we support,” Kalimullah said, adding that the foundation’s work and success feed into other outreach programmes that they sponsor.

Lim: “They make it creative and fun for the children.” Pic by Farha Harith/LEADERONOMICS

KEEP IT SIMPLE – AND FUN!

Lim Beng Choo, executive trustee of the ECM Libra Foundation makes his observation about a project aided by the foundation: “We noticed that one vital key deep within the inner recesses of Sarawak did not even have the need for a secondary school because none of the kids had ever passed their UPSR. (Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah) exam in primary school. And most of the time, the kids don’t even show up at school.”

“‘The village elders approached us, saying they needed help. So, a youth leader got a group of form five school-leavers and several university students on their term break, and travelled to this village to help the kids pass their exams,” Lim said. The group, he said, would go into the village – Long Lami, a remote Penan settlement in Ulu Baram – and stay there for eight weeks at a time. With each passing year, they have managed to steadily increase the percentage of students who pass their UPSR exams. Lim described how they achieved this, and the method was surprisingly simple and fun: “These kids were not interested in studying because they did not understand why they needed to study. So, these young people who were willing to play with the kids came in and used creative ways to teach the children. They used games and group activities, mixing elements of commerce and nature to conduct their lessons.”

“They make it creative and fun for the children to discover the importance of learning,” he added.

“To us, it is important that these kids at least get their ABCs and 123s right before they ever decide to drop out of school,” said Lim.

Dedication and discipline

Lim related another instance where a tertiary institution in Penang accepted a group of orang asli girls who wanted to further their education, despite them not having the complete prerequisite for admission.

“The principal made it her personal mission to mentor them regularly, just to make sure that they did not drop out. Four out of five of them are now working and repaying their loans.”

Repayment of interest and bond-free loans, said Cheah Sook Lian, senior manager of ECM Libra Foundation, was primarily a way for beneficiaries to gain a sense of self-esteem.

“Before they sign the loan agreement, we make sure that they understand what they are getting themselves into. We also have their guarantors understand their roles. We are quite tough with them during this process, and along the way give them tips, hoping to prepare them for their job interviews,” Cheah said.

Cheah believes the programmes exist not just to educate, but also to instill hope and confidence in the children that would ultimately allow them unleash their true potential.

“And not quite halfway,” Cheah said.

The ECM Libra Foundation supports a number of NGOs, individuals and groups to improve the lives of Malaysian youth. To read more about their initiatives, go to bit.ly/2o7pnnu or scan the QR code to read the rest of this article and learn how you can help through education.

ROBERTO CARLOS KICKS OFF THE REAL MADRID FOUNDATION CLINICS IN MALAYSIA

Photo courtesy of Real Madrid Foundation Clinic

For more details on the programme, pricing, schedule and registration, visit www.frmclinicsmalaysia.com

Closing the dropout gap in schools

Epsom College Malaysia (ECiM) – a fully-customisable and a fun learning environment for its students or as a group of orang asli girls who wanted to further their education, despite them not having the complete prerequisite for admission.

“This is the chance for us to make sure to steadily increase the percentage of students who pass their UPSR exams,” Lim said. The group, he said, would go into the village – Long Lami, a remote Penan settlement in Ulu Baram – and stay there for eight weeks at a time. With each passing year, they have managed to steadily increase the percentage of students who pass their UPSR exams. Lim described how they achieved this, and the method was surprisingly simple and fun: “These kids were not interested in studying because they did not understand why they needed to study. So, these young people who were willing to play with the kids came in and used creative ways to teach the children. They used games and group activities, mixing elements of commerce and nature to conduct their lessons.”

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WHY WE NEED TO SAY THE EMPEROR HAS NO CLOTHES

PRETENTIOUSNESS AND HYPOCRISY ONLY THRIVE WHEN WE FEED INTO THEM

By MICHELLE GIBBINGS
editor@leaderonomics.com

YOU may remember from your childhood the Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale titled – The Emperor Has No Clothes.

The story is centred on two common people who pretended to be weavers and convinced the Emperor they could make a suit – the finest in the land. The magic was that this suit would be invisible to those who were too stupid or not worthy of its design.

In fact, the Emperor’s new suit of clothes was his “birthday suit”. However, when the Emperor paraded in front of his subjects, no one wanted to call out that he had nothing on but his under-wear. It was far too stupid. It was only a young child who felt free to speak his mind and exclaim “But the Emperor has no clothes” to state the obvious.

As with all fairy tales there is a moral to the story. We are preyed on the Emperor’s vanity and on the fact that people around him wouldn’t have the courage to speak up for fear of looking stupid. In a modern-day context, the tale is still very much relevant and applicable. We are tribal creatures. This means we like to fit in and be part of the pack. We would rather follow the crowd, than be side-lined and left out.

This pressure to conform means we can hold off challenging the status quo or questioning things that others around us are accepting. We can make decisions and take “action” with little more reason than the fact that everyone else is doing it.

In behavioural economics, this is known as the herd mentality. It plays out all the time on the share market. If a company’s share price goes up, people will rush to buy. When the share price falls, people will rush to sell.

These actions often take place with little logic attached to the merits of the price fall or increase. This is because when the share price falls, people lose their nerve thinking that if everyone else is selling, I should too. If the stock is going up people don’t want to miss getting their piece of the action.

This seemingly irrational behaviour demonstrates how the choices of a larger group can influence the actions of an individual.

But it goes even further than that. The University of Leiden did a study and found that humans flock like sheep and birds. Yes, really!

The study found that it only takes around 5% of people to walk in a certain direction to influence the rest of the crowd’s direction.

What the researchers did was run a series of experiments where groups of people were asked to walk randomly around a large hall. Participants were not allowed to communicate with each other during the experiment. However, a select few people had detailed information about where to walk in the hall.

What happened may surprise you. The results found that those individuals with details on where to walk were ultimately followed by the others in the hall, forming a snake-like line of people. So, the participants followed others in the group with little thought as to why.

Today, organisations that are facing increasing complexity due to a volatile business environment need people who are willing to challenge and ask questions. People who aren’t going to blindly follow what everyone else is doing.

People who are willing to stand out from the pack. It can be hard to be the person who plays the role of the sceptic, and who puts on what Edward de Bono called the “black hat”.

There are times when it’s necessary to speak up and out. This is not about being difficult. It’s about making sure that all sides of an issue are considered.

We worry that if no one else is voicing a concern, perhaps we’ve missed something or misinterpreted the issue being discussed. Silence becomes an easier option. But remaining silent may result in poor decisions being made.

Consequently, there are times when it’s necessary to speak up and out. This is not about being difficult. It’s about making sure that all sides of an issue are considered.

Effective leaders recognise this challenge, and are ready for it. They know that bias pervades decision-making. So, if you want to lead well in today’s ambiguous and ever-changing world, you need to lead courageously and be prepared to say the Emperor has no clothes!

BY SHARON ONG
editor@leaderonomics.com

THE Fourth Industrial Revolution – also known as Industry 4.0 – is indeed upon us: smart machines, the Internet of Things, Artificial Intelligence (AI), crowdfunding technologies, and robots being implemented across a range of industries.

Like not another industrial revolution that came before, they threaten to eliminate certain jobs while creating new ones. Who are the winners and who are the losers? What does this mean for blue- and white-collar professionals in Malaysia? How can recruiters respond effectively to leverage changing criteria in talent selection? Not just for the losers in this Fourth Industrial Revolution will be workers engaged in low-skill, low-wage jobs. Meanwhile, adaptive individuals who stay ahead of the technological curve will find themselves in increasing demand.

These are professionals that can seamlessly integrate new technologies and ideas into their daily work practices, or business leaders who can think beyond established paradigms to embrace daring, strategic ideas on implementing disruptive technologies.

Others who come out ahead would be employees that engage daily in the kind of complex decision-making that AI or robots will take longer to master. They are curious about what could be, rather than merely accepting what they are being told. By doing this they welcome all types of news – even news that is difficult to hear – as they know it will help ensure more effective decision-making.

Alfred Sloan, the former chief executive officer of General Motors is quoted as saying: “Gentlemen, I take it we are all in complete agreement on the decision here. I propose we postpone further discussion on this matter until our next meeting to give ourselves time to develop disagreement and perhaps gain some understanding of what the decision is all about”.

Reflecting on decisions and being prepared to accept you may not have all the answers is a critical part of leadership, so too is having courage.

So, if you want to lead well in today’s ambiguous and ever-changing world, you need to lead courageously and be prepared to say the Emperor has no clothes!

MINING THE RIGHT TALENT

At the same time, good talent is lured in droves to better-paying jobs overseas, where the impact of disruptive technologies will be felt just as much, if not more.

What do recruiters need to do in preparation for the hiring challenges of Industry 4.0?

To get Sharon’s take on this, direct your browser to bit.ly/2py55SN or scan this QR code to read the rest of this article and find more about future job trends on our website.

Sharon Ong specialises in the recruitment of mid to senior level professionals in the engineering and manufacturing discipline at Michael Page Malaysia. If you’d like to share your thoughts with her or have any burning questions to ask her, e-mail editor@leaderonomics.com.
A special conference for Chief Executive Officers, Managing Directors and Company Directors of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs)

It has been widely acknowledged that 2017 will be a challenging year for the global economy. With SMEs accounting for 97% of business establishments and 65% of employment in Malaysia, there is no doubt we need to direct more attention and support towards this sector. Despite – and because of – 2017’s tough market outlook, this is a critical time for SMEs to reflect, regroup and prepare to seize the next wave of opportunity.

This exclusive conference aims to help CEOs navigate beyond their pain points – slow growth, lack of scalability and declining margins – and equip them to find solutions for their growth and scaling issues.

The conference will include insights from prominent global leaders who have succeeded in growing their organisations such as Dato’ Chang Khim Wah, who built EcoWorld into a RM6 bil revenue organisation in just a few years, and thought leaders like Leaderonomics’ Roshan Thiran who will demonstrate the application of his Four Constraints model for SMEs. Vishen Lakhiani, who developed MindValley into one of the biggest online publishers in the world, will share insights on how he overcame significant constraints to succeed and grow. He will be joined by entrepreneurial pioneers like Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis technology expert Prof Dr Ali Jafari, Anecdote International’s Mark Schenk, who equips leaders to harness the power of storytelling for growing their businesses, BFM radio station founder and CEO Malek Ali and SEEK Asia Malaysia CEO Suresh Thiru.

Don’t miss this opportunity to hear some of Malaysia’s most successful homegrown entrepreneurs share insights on how to leverage technology, stay competitive in the business today, and learn new ways to overcome the factors constraining your company’s ability to move from good to great.