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!

---

**SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT**

Grow and scale your SME to greatness. Learn great tips and insights from leaders who have done just that at the SME CEO Conference 2017 on Apr 26, 2017. Register at leaderonomics.org/learn/events/ or scan the following QR Code.

---

**If you would like your organisation to be featured in this pullout, contact us at editor@leaderonomics.com**
SMES AND THEIR NEXT BREAKTHROUGH

If you walk long distance on a flat terrain regularly, you may realise that your pace eventually becomes steady and comfortable — and at some point, it may even become easy to finish the lap in record time.

Easy is good; after all, it may have taken months of baby steps and training to get to the speed and pace you intended. But with every stage of mastery come the questions: what, and where next?

Here’s where you choose: do you begin to run, climb or continue walking at the same pace?

Let’s take this analogy and apply it to the world of business — specifically the world of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs).

Small companies begin with a big promise, and an ambition to nestle itself into profitable territory. In the process, these organisations aspire to win, retain and grow their targeted customer or client base.

What happens next is a series of intensive exercises to make the most out of capital or investor funds, and plug a lean but high-performing team into the strategic and operational activities that involve the new business line.

Growth may be exponential here, and founders and chief executive officers would relish the positive reinforcement of their decisions through robust sales and overall profitability of the small business.

As the line of business becomes stable and profitable, SMES are then faced with the question of where to go next, how and if they should diversify, and where they see their businesses in the years to come.

Some organisations choose to invest in additional muscle power to scale and grow, while others opt to maintain a steady stream of profit, without rocking the boat.

For many successful SMES — as well as those that are looking to expand — the next breakthrough holds the future of the company, and the direction it takes at this stage of its existence would determine its longevity in the market.

In this week’s edition of Leaderonomics, we look at several Malaysian companies that have created a unique space for their products and services, and diversified cleverly to grow in and around the region.

Prethiba Esvary spoke to leaders of four award-winning tech SMEs under Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC)’s GAIN programme and writes about insights from their humble beginnings to where they are today.

Tranglo, Kat Technologies, Merchantrade and Securemct Technology unveil the aspirations and motivations that brought creativity and innovation into their businesses. Read this story on Page 4.

Some SMEs may encounter a brick wall as they grow, and it is during this period that complementary agencies such as the Human Resources Development Fund (HRDF) come in, offering companies the financial aid and opportunity to widen their talent pool, and focus on upskilling, reskilling, and multi-skilling their workforce.

On Page 2, understand the big picture of SME development in Malaysia and why it’s important for HRDF to spearhead growth in this sector through its various initiatives.

We also take a step back, and look at the five stages of growth among small companies and what happens to organisations when they hit specific milestones. This summary, based on an article published in the Harvard Business Review, is on Page 8.

Jack Chua takes a deeper look at exactly where the SME industry in Malaysia is right now, as well as the six high impact initiatives drawn up under the government’s SME Masterplan 2012-2020.

He talks about what local businesses need to do to turn Malaysia into a high-income economy. Read his analysis on Page 9.

Also in this issue: an interview with a special needs educator and leader who wants to groom others like her; the four key points that would make your CV relevant, and life lessons from the once-homeless millionaire philanthropist Chris Gardner.

We hope you gain greater insights into the world of small and medium businesses through this issue. Write to editor@leaderonomics.com and share your SME journey with us here at Leaderonomics.

Lydia Gomez
Editor

I want to have breakfast with Prof Ali

The brain learns in many ways, not just via classroom methods, and we at Leaderonomics know this. And so, we have partnered with Purdue & Indiana University’s Prof Dr Ali Jafari to design a digital learning system and content to help you learn effectively at your own pace.

And it is made available to every organisation for only RM1,000 per company (yes, per company not per employee). To find out more, e-mail us at info@leaderonomics.com. For your chance to have breakfast with Prof Ali, who will be in Malaysia on April 26, e-mail us at people@leaderonomics.com.

To find out about our leadership philosophy from LEADER ONOMICS.COM

leadersnomics.com

Guide Is Powered By

THE WAY TO GET STARTED IS TO QUIT TALKING AND BEGIN DOING. — WALT DISNEY

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!
THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS BEGINS WITH YOU GRABBING HOLD OF YOUR DESTINY

By ROSHAN THIRAN roshan.thiran@leaderonomics.com

“In late March, the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre hosted the 2017 Global Transformation Forum (GTF), which saw global leaders and iconic figures share a platform to impart stories of their successes and triumphs, and how they overcame obstacles and challenges along the way. Valuable insights were gained from powerhouses such as Jack Ma, Sir Richard Branson, Usain Bolt, and many other leaders who set inspiring examples for the rest of us to learn from and follow. In the years that I have been involved in the GTF, the sense of wonder at the incredible suc-

cess stories on display during the two-day annual event has never diminished. This year, however, I was particularly blown away by the unstoppable force that is Chris Gardner – founder of broker-

dge firm Gardner Group, motivational speaker, and international philanthropist. While there might be some who are unfamiliar with the name, millions were blown away by the man who has worked him-

self out there and Make. It. Happen.

The Pursuit of Happiness

Once homeless, Gardner’s perseverance brought him success. Pic: Wikimedia Commons.

There’s a steely defiance and determination that lies behind the warm humility of this man who is in charge; not of others, but himself. He’s a man who gives off an aura of some-

thing which saw global leaders and iconic figures share a platform to impart stories of their successes and triumphs, and how they overcame obstacles and challenges along the way. Valuable insights were gained from powerhouses such as Jack Ma, Sir Richard Branson, Usain Bolt, and many other leaders who set inspiring examples for the rest of us to learn from and follow. In the years that I have been involved in the GTF, the sense of wonder at the incredible suc-

cess stories on display during the two-day annual event has never diminished. This year, however, I was particularly blown away by the unstoppable force that is Chris Gardner – founder of broker-
dge firm Gardner Group, motivational speaker, and international philanthropist. While there might be some who are unfamiliar with the name, millions were blown away by the man who has worked himself out there and Make. It. Happen. He started out with no money, no for-
mal education, no contacts, no support, while bringing up a child on his own with-

out a roof over his head. All he had was passion, a plan, and the determination to never give up, no matter what. And, that’s the lesson his story teaches us.

We can all proclaim hardships and dif-
ficulties, and I don’t mean to diminish them at all; our problems are very much real, and it would be churlish to say oth-
erwise. However, no problem has the power to stop us in our tracks: we stop because often, we feel we can’t go on. And yet, there are so many examples of what can be achieved when we stop allowing our problems to rule over us but instead drive us forward with an unyielding refusal to be beaten by life.

In his words: “The world is your oyster. It’s up to you to find the pearl.” Chris Gardner is a man who looks sharp in a crisp shirt and tailored business suit. But Chris Gardner is also a man who started out with nothing. Chances are, you are now in a better position than he was when he started chasing his dream.

You might not become a globally sought-after speaker, and you might not become a multi-millionaire. But if you give everything to your dreams, who knows what might happen?

Who says you can’t change the world with what’s inside you and create the kind of change that makes people sit up and take note? All you have to do is decide to put your-
sellet out there and Make. It. Happen.

The Pursuit of Happiness:

E

A

R

O

L

F

D

O

P

L

E

R

T

N

E

M

I

C

E

D

0

T

H

1

1

2

A

R

O

S

H

A

N

T

N

I

A

G

R

E

D

O

L

S

H

P

Y

E

M

I

C

E

D

E

S

J

A

A

N

G

F

E

R

A

G

E

G

L

O

C

S

H

A

G

C

E

M

E

R

E

G

R

E

D

O

L

S

H

P

Y

E

M

I

C

E

D

E

S

J

A

A

N

G

O

C

E

R

E

D

O

L

S

H

P

Y

E

M

I

C

E

D

E

S

J

A

A

N

G

L

O

C

S

H

A

G

E

R

D

O

L

S

H

P

Y

E

M

I

C

E

D

E

S

J

A

A

N

G

D

O

T

H

1

1

2

A

R

O

S

H

A

N

T

N

I

A

G

R

E

D

O

L

S

H

P

Y

E

M

I

C

E

D

E

S

J

A

A

N

G

L

O

C

S

H

A

G

E

R

D

O

L

S

H

P

Y

E

M

I

C

E

D

E

S

J

A

A

N

G

www.leaderonomics.com | Saturday 22 April 2017

Like this article? Follow us @Leaderonomics on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram.

DECIDE TO MAKE IT HAPPEN

The Pursuit of Happiness begins with you grabbing hold of your destiny.

By ROSHAN THIRAN

“As long as I kept moving forward, one foot in front of the other, the voices of fear and shame, the messages from those who wanted me to believe that I wasn’t good enough, would be stilled.” — Chris Gardner

E

A

R

O

L

F

D

O

P

L

E

M

I

C

E

D

E

S

J

A

A

N

G

R

E

D

O

L

S

H

P

Y

E

M

I

C

E

D

E

S

J

A

A

N

G

HR NETWORKING SESSION, PENDANG

HR: AGENTS OF CHANGE

Leaderonomics, together with The STAR Penang, brings you a complimentary HR networking and learning session with Lee Lung Nien, CEO of Citibank Berhad and Roshan Thiran, CEO of Leaderonomics. This session is designed for HR leaders in Penang and the Northern area to gain insights on how they can become ‘Agents of Change’ for their respective businesses, as shared by Roshan. Well-known for his dynamic leadership and passion for transforming the HR space across Asia, Lee will address the CEO’s perspective of how HR leaders can move from functional and administrative roles into business leadership roles.

11 MAY 2017 (THURSDAY)
1:00PM TO 5:00PM
VENUE: The Star Media Group,
202, Jalan Sultan Azlan Shah,
11900 Bayan Lepas, Pulau Pinang,
To confirm your attendance and for more information, go to bit.ly/hrnetworkingpenang or call 019-348 6413.

This session is exclusively for leaders of the HR function only.

To confirm your attendance and for more information, go to bit.ly/hrnetworkingpenang or call 019-348 6413.

This session is exclusively for leaders of the HR function only.

To confirm your attendance and for more information, go to bit.ly/hrnetworkingpenang or call 019-348 6413.

This session is exclusively for leaders of the HR function only.

To confirm your attendance and for more information, go to bit.ly/hrnetworkingpenang or call 019-348 6413.

This session is exclusively for leaders of the HR function only.
HOW DO YOU CONSTRUCT A THRIVING BUSINESS?

4 COMPANIES SHARE THEIR JOURNEY FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS TO SUCCESS

By Preththa Eswar

www.leaderonomics.com

A decade ago, Trango observed a growing trend among its peers in Malaysia, particularly iPhones were found in the hands of many, as well as the proliferation of mobile Internet, and to be a trend towards a cashless economy. 

Aware of the growing trend, the management of Trango decided to seize the opportunity and decided to start a mobile payment application for families, a way for them to send money to their family back home. At that time, mobile remittance was not considered to be a very big business, and there were only a few players in the market. 

Unlike many of the other players, Trango chose to focus on the needs of the migrant community and developed a mobile remittance service solely for them. This was a strategic move as it allowed Trango to differentiate itself from its competitors and focus on a niche market.

In 2010, Trango launched its mobile remittance service, called Trango. The service was initially only available in Malaysia and Singapore, but in 2013, it expanded to include other countries in the region, such as Thailand, Vietnam, and the Philippines. 

Today, Trango is one of the largest mobile remittance service providers in the region, with over 1 million users in more than 12 countries. The company continues to invest in its technology and infrastructure to improve the service and offer better user experience.

This is an example of how companies can seize opportunities and differentiate themselves in order to succeed in a competitive market. By focusing on a niche market and providing a unique solution, Trango was able to carve out a significant share of the mobile remittance market in the region.
By Kamini Singar & Lydia Gomez

SME Definitions

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) account for more than 30% of GDP in Malaysia and are responsible for more than 75% of services sector employment. SMEs provide more than 40% of jobs in Malaysia and account for more than 60% of the country’s export earnings.

SMEs are defined as businesses that employ less than 500 people and account for less than 5% of total revenue. They are categorized into three types: micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSEs).

The Economic Census 2011 shows that SMEs make up the bulk of businesses in Malaysia with a heavy concentration in agriculture, forestry, hunting, and fishing; mining and quarrying; manufacturing; wholesale; and retail trade. These industries account for more than 50% of the country’s GDP and employ more than 30% of the labor force.

SMEs play a significant role in Malaysia’s economic growth, with over 30% of GDP and more than 50% of export earnings. They are responsible for creating more than 75% of the country’s services sector employment and are a major contributor to the national economy.

How HRDF Plays a Role in Powering Up Malaysia’s SME Sector

Holding true to its agenda? Well, over 80% of employers have registered with us and subsequently be entitled to record their employees’ past ID and work records for the next three years. SMEs can conduct employee evaluations and record them in the Performance Management System Cycle (View Figure 2).

There are ample initiatives being put in place by HRDF to address skill shortages, talent mobility, and talent retention in order to ensure that the right people with the right skills can fill the jobs. Business owners are encouraged to take advantage of these programmes.

The Ministry of Human Resources has recently introduced a comprehensive HRDF Training and Development Programme that aims to improve the competitiveness of SMEs. The programme is designed to help SMEs develop relevant reskilling and upskilling programmes to address their immediate needs.

SMEs are encouraged to take advantage of these programmes to address their specific challenges, particularly skill shortages and mismatches. With the HRDF's On The Job Training (OTJ) initiative, SMEs can provide on-the-job training to their employees, helping them to acquire new skills and abilities.

The SME Definition

SMEs are defined as businesses that employ less than 500 people and account for less than 5% of total revenue. They are categorized into three types: micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSEs).

The Economic Census 2011 shows that SMEs make up the bulk of businesses in Malaysia with a heavy concentration in agriculture, forestry, hunting, and fishing; mining and quarrying; manufacturing; wholesale; and retail trade. These industries account for more than 50% of the country’s GDP and employ more than 30% of the labor force.

SMEs play a significant role in Malaysia’s economic growth, with over 30% of GDP and more than 50% of export earnings. They are responsible for creating more than 75% of the country’s services sector employment and are a major contributor to the national economy.
THE FIVE STAGES OF SME GROWTH

WHAT COMPANIES GO THROUGH FROM INCEPTION TO SUSTAINABILITY

By LYDIA GOMEZ
lydia.gomez@leaderonomics.com

BUSINESS is a big word. Or more appropriately, it is a word that demands big things — big ideas, plans, revenue, and presence.

For many business owners, the growth trajectory from the point of inception, right until the period of sustainability, can become a journey that provides valuable insights on what works and what doesn’t in the world of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs).

While each business can be entirely different in nature, their growth phases display similar patterns based on their specific characteristics. A few years ago, at Leaderonomics, we developed a CEO accelerator programme, called the Leadership Dojo. We had the opportunity to get up-close and personal with almost 20 CEOs who ran varying sizes of businesses. What we learnt was that there is a pattern and formula for business growth. From the start-up stage till the IPO or exit stage, there is an organisational developmental element and also an owner development piece. In the organisational piece, there are numerous constraints faced but if we look at it in a macro sense, it is very similar. Leaderonomics CEO, Roshan Thiran, wrote a piece on the four pieces confronted by owners, which can be referenced at: http://bit.ly/4constraints.

THE RESEARCH

As I was having a conversation recently with Roshan, he shared with me a Harvard Business Review (HBR) magazine article written by Neil C. Churchill and Virginia L. Lewis depicting the five stages of growth for an SME and I thought parts of it were relevant to the Malaysian SME context.

Let’s take a look at these stages and see what it looks like for companies to make it through to the fifth and most desired phase of growth. The five stages are below.

STAGE I: EXISTENCE

At the point of inception, business owners conceptualise the big idea, test the market, secure funding, and meet customer needs and services they need to deploy to become an authorised organisation. It is also during this stage where most organisations thus far and begin to scale and grow? This phase is divided into two sub-stages: Success-Ostension (D) and Success-Growth (G).

Companies at the D stage are described as those that have ‘attained true economic health, have sufficient size and product-market penetration to ensure economic success, and earn average or above-average profits’. This means that the company would most likely choose to stay this way, which then creates the need to hire managers who would maintain smooth-sailing business based upon linear company goals. HBR states: “Basic financial, marketing, and production systems are in place. Planning in the form of operational budgets supports functional delegation. The owner and, to a lesser extent, the company managers, should be monitoring a strategy to essentially, maintain the status quo.”

While hands-on and involved in previoi

STAGE II: STAYING ALIVE

Companies that make it to this phase are those that have demonstrated that there is demand for their product or service, and that this market is the key to ensuring their survival in the next business stage. In other words, these companies have shown viable business models that can compete within the greater market.

According to HBR, the key challenge in this phase relates to revenue and expenses: “Can we generate enough cash to break even and to cover the repair or replacement of our capital assets as they wear out? Can we, at a minimum, generate enough cash flow to stay in business and to finance growth to a size that is sufficiently large, given our industry and market niche, to earn an economic return on our assets and labour?”

At this stage, the company operates in a manner only slightly more complex than Stage I: direction still comes from the owner, while managers are put in place to ensure that targets are met; concerns are still centred around revenue and profitability.

This is one of the toughest stages to be in. Every day, operational decisions are at the centre of attention. It was the same at Leaderonomics when we were in this stage. As a social enterprise, our key metric and measurement was our social impact. But to remain sustainable, revenue and expenses were our key secondary metrics. Also, when I dialogue with numerous CEOs who are in this stage, many of them feel helpless and crippled by the daily grind to keep the organisation afloat. And whilst some organisations transition from this phase to Stage III, many get stuck in this virtuous and unending cycle.

STAGE III: SUCCESS

Here, success can come with a conundrum: do companies continue with its stable and profitable business or do they make the most out of their achievements thus far and begin to scale and grow? This stage is divided into two sub-stages: Success-Ostension (D) and Success-Growth (G).

Companies at the D stage are described as those that have ‘attained true economic health, have sufficient size and product-market penetration to ensure economic success, and earn average or above-average profits’. This means that the company would most likely choose to stay this way, which then creates the need to hire managers who would maintain smooth-sailing business based upon linear company goals. HBR states: “Basic financial, marketing, and production systems are in place. Planning in the form of operational budgets supports functional delegation. The owner and, to a lesser extent, the company managers, should be monitoring a strategy to essentially, maintain the status quo.”

While hands-on and involved in previoi

STAGE IV: TAKE OFF!

At the G stage, companies have the intent to take the business to the next level — however, if the venture fails, G companies should be able to detect this in time to scale back to D stage and stick to what is currently working best.

HBR specifies that Stage IV companies should address three pertinent issues: delegation and cash.

Here, owners must know if they are capable of delegating responsibility to others in order to improve the overall effectiveness of a new complex, and growing enterprise. And, if they have the capacity to tolerate mistakes being made. At this stage, where growth is intense and necessary for bigger gains, owners must ascertain if there is enough cash to manage changing demands and investments.

Businesses become increasingly segmented at this stage, with the creation of departments and divisions which, according to HBR, are usually in sales or production.

STAGE V: SUSTAINABILITY

As companies enter this stage, management becomes decentralised, and systems are well-developed. The owner and the business are now comfortable with each other and the business has reached a stage where it has more than enough financial resources and executive talent.

One of the speakers at the upcoming SME Conference 2017 is Datuk Chang Khim Wah, CEO of Jobstreet. Jobstreet was bought over by Seek Asia, and is one of the few SMEs that have managed to get to this stage. Suresh Thiu, who is today the CEO of Seek Asia, has seen the highs and lows of getting an organisation through the various stages till it becomes sustainable and successful. It wasn’t easy, but he stuck it out and succeeded in. Recently, Jack Ma, China’s most successful entrepreneur, shared how his company had a painful growth process. Yet, it endured and with an unorthodox business model, differentiated culture and solid structures and processes, together with Jack’s leadership, they managed to overcome the odds to take his SME to greatness.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Outside of Jobstreet, we have seen companies like EcoWorld grow from a start-up into an RM8 billion business in five years. Datuk Chang Khim Wah, CEO of EcoWorld will also be sharing his success secrets in the upcoming SME CEO conference. If you carefully analyse their story, you will see similarities to the five stages and their growth patterns. Some of their growth is accelerated whilst others take more time.

The difference between the accelerated growth and the slow growth organisation is undermined by two key areas — owner challenges and organisational constraints. Owner challenges include their personal clarity of goals for self and the business and also how they can grow into better leaders, and upgrade their capability to drive operations and business strategy. Organisational issues include their business model, operational, culture, processes and structure and other factors like financial resources and people issues. And so, the SME CEO who addresses these key challenges would likely accelerate growth.

Like this article? Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram.

www.leaderonomics.com | Saturday 22 April 2017
Malaysia’s SME Landscape and How Far We’ve Come

How smaller companies impact the Malaysian economy

By Jack Chua

Malaysia’s SME landscape is crucial for the nation’s economic growth. These small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) contribute significantly to the GDP, employment, and innovation. Let’s explore how these businesses are driving progress.

1. BREAKING THE BARRIERS
Starting a business requires one to invest time, energy, and money. One of the top initiatives of the SME Masterplan is to minimise the time and cost of starting a new business.

2. BRAINSTORMING BUSINESS IDEAS
Before starting a business, one must have a solid idea in mind. The second initiative of the Masterplan is to maximise the output of business ideas. Malaysia’s digital economy is a key idea for today’s SMEs, the topic of start-ups is often brought up. With the rapid rise – and subsequent dominance – of global tech start-ups like Facebook, Twitter, and Amazon, there has been a phenomenal increase in great ideas that can transform the market.

3. FINANCING GREAT ENDEAVOURS
Start-ups and SMEs may have the greatest ideas, but little can be accomplished if these ideas go unnoticed by investors. The next challenge of the Masterplan involves finances. SME Corp plans to maximise the number of companies funded.

4. BRINGING IT OFFSHORE
Even to stand a chance at becoming a high-income nation, Malaysian businesses need not only do well domestically, but also be competitive in the global market. Which brings us to the question: when a business is funded and running, would it stand a chance by competing internationally?

5. FINDING THE NEXT BIG THING
Since the staggering success of brands like Uber, Airbnb, and Dropbox, investors have searched the globe for the next ultra-high-growth firm dubbed ‘unicorns’. In the startup investment world, ‘unicorns’ are fledging companies that have a valuation of over US$1bil. They are elusive, yet highly rewarding for seed funders and venture capitalists.

Companies with the policy of ‘Get Big Fast’ (GBF) can be highly valuable to our economy. One of the high impact programmes by SME Corp is to maximise the number of high growth firms. With the Masterplan, SME Corp has set aside resources for the Catalyst Programme which was established to back firms that have the potential to become ‘home-grown champions’. To help with this goal, Cradle Fund Sdn Bhd, under the purview of the Ministry of Finance, manages an investment programme for start-ups and SMEs. It has 31 co-investment partners from diverse backgrounds, with some from the Equity Crowdfunding sector, bringing in around RM190 mil in co-investment funds. Notable recipients of Cradle funds include Bekalas, Maukerja and SupplyCart.

In addition, the discovery of high-growth SMEs has also occurred at events where entrepreneurs come to pitch their ideas to investors, such as the MaGIC’s MIP Investor Demo Day.

---

Jack writes about the psychology of leadership. His interests span across various fields - from psychometrics (the science of measuring the human psyche), to developing software that improve people’s lives. 
CREATING SPACE FOR THE SPECIAL LEADER

A GUIDE TO DEVELOPING LEADERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

By LOUISA DEYDASON
louisa.alvyn@leaderonomics.com

“It is never too late to expand the mind of a person on the autism spectrum.”—Dr. Temple Grandin, Professor of animal science, and autism spokesperson

HARLENE Marie Samuel has been an Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA) therapist for over eight years now. In 2012, however, and year Charlene spread her wings and flew solo. She took her first step to create her own firm of care. She had a vision for a centre that was affordable and accessible to more people as early intervention for children with autism wasn’t very affordable.

Besides being armed with a Psychology Degree, Charlene is a certi-fied Play Therapy Practitioner and has a certificate in Special Education Needs and Learning Difficulties. She is putting her formal education and all the years of experience of being a therapist into good use as she takes greater leadership roles in this arena.

I had the privilege of speaking with Charlene, in conjunction with Autism Awareness Month to discuss her leadership journey, and how members of the autism community can be supported to take charge of their lives and develop the leader within them.

Q: You’ve begun an exciting new chapter; what does this entail?

A: We’ve been working for a few years back, we were doing home-based therapy which we tried our best to streamline. We grew by training therapists and then, those therapists were training other therapists. I have been fortunate to have involvement in all the stages. They came in with a slightly different vision but also wanted to provide the best quality therapy possible. We have become the first centre with fully separated spaces so each client can have the most distraction-free 1:1 therapy possible. We do still run socialisation programmes but now every therapist can have their own space. This makes man-ageing behaviours and tasks much more efficient.

We maintained our old practice of in-house trainings and working closely with parents — supporting and training them as well. We have found a holistic environment for everyone — parents, chil-dren and therapists — at our new centre. I have been so lucky to have been able to work alongside great people with great ideas that resulted in this centre. This has enabled us to help more kids and work more closely together although we are facing challenges in coordinating and streamlining this process.

Q: Transitions, even good ones, can be hard. How do you manage that?

A: To be honest, I have such an amaz-ing team. strong team that the transition was smooth. I think the hardest part for me was the administrative work involved in moving from home-based therapy to centre-based — licenses, cleaners, taxes and really streamlining what we do. I had to learn a lot in terms of company coop-eration. Being a sole proprietor was quite simple but once you move to private lim-ited, things become a bit more tedious. I learnt that having a strong founda-tion was so important in achieving and managing all these. From the get-go, we established our ‘hierarchy’ of therapists, trainers, consultants-in-training and consultants who make delegating work simpler. I could trust that the work was going to be done. Being able to have faith in that meant I could effectively multi-task also — seeing clients, admin work and everything else. I wouldn’t be anywhere without my team.

Q: How did you build such a strong team?

A: It was trial-and-error at first but as someone who worked on the ground as a therapist, I think I learned what works and doesn’t. That’s how it is for my team, they start off as therapists and I try my best to ensure that they know everything that I know about this field. That way, the knowledge and experience is shared equally.

Secondly, it’s important to give credit to your team and trust them. We obvi-ously only hire who we think are the best for the job — and micromanaging them is so counterproductive to their skills. You just get bogged down on small details. I remembered my experiences and what worked best when I was in training and I apply that now. I am fortunate to have formed a close bond with my trainers and consultants that we can speak open-ly about anything, not just work. I think it’s important to have that friendship but also have a line for how things should be at work.

I see a lot of myself in my trainers and therapists — the assertiveness to learn something. They are the ones always looking to grow and improve. It’s great to see them so passionate and looking to do this long term. So, I would simply say, mould peo-ple the way you would’ve like to have been moulded.

Q: Would it be fair to say having shared values is key?

A: Our objective is shared — we all want to support individuals with autism or special needs — but I think it’sulti-mately how you go about it. You can have a lot of visions and missions on paper but there must be a conscious effort to cultivate it in real life — within the company.

Drawing on my experience, I know there are days you try so hard but no one recognises it, and there are days you feel totally unsupported. These are things I am very conscious about cultivating through group sharing over a meal and providing adequate training.

Q: How does your training programme enable kids with autism become leaders in their own right?

A: It varies, depending on the age but I think it really comes down to develop-ing self-reliance and independence. Give them a sense of accomplishments where they’re really proud of something all by themselves. It must start with boosting their confidence as well as their sense of independence. It’s good to draw joy from the intrinsic reward of doing something independently rather than focusing on external reinforcements. We definitely encourage kids (who are able to) to lead the way and make choices. But this depends on a few factors includ-ing where children lie on the spectrum — how verbal they are etc.

I am working with a couple of indi-viduals who have leadership potentials and set a good example of what people with autism can do (taking the focus away from what they can’t do). We have someone on board with us who has autism who struggles with taking instruction and attention-based tasks. He helps around and is eager to work. He is proof that autism has no limits. He needs some support but can still produce high quality work. He makes a lot of our materials and I hope people can see that individuals with autism can hold jobs and be an asset in the workplace. He is eager to work and wants to be out doing something but of course, opportunities can be limited here. As a centre dealing with autism, we have been given the privilege to him this step-ping stone and maybe in six months or so I can see him out-growing us, which I think is wonderful. Companies can sup-port people with autism — it’s just about adopting a new system that is more inclusive in nature.

As individuals who have easy access to lead-ership platforms, it is essential for us to cre-ate a space that is inclusive but also efficient for all. The key to this is to make workplaces ‘friendly’ to employees with autism so they are empowered to be great workers. This doesn’t mean giving them easy jobs because you feel sorry for them. It means hir-ing them because they meet a need in your business and have potential to be an asset to the workplace. We’ve already witnessed people with autism make history and develop within the industries. All they needed was the right envi-ronment. Here are a few ways in which people with autism can bring value to the workplace:

1. They can be great observers.

When given clear direction, people with autism become very focused and committed to a task. They also have the ability to become a model employee. It’s important to make sure they understand what is expected first.

2. They can offer new, creative perspectives.

People on the autism spectrum are wired differently and have active imaginations. Leaders can leverage this when they look for fresh solutions and creative ideas. Engaging them and giving them the space to share their ideas could lead to brilliant new concepts.

3. They have their own skills, let them show you.

While sometimes people with autism might struggle to ‘sell themselves’ — because you feel sorry for them. It means hiring decisions. Sometimes a verbal interview, employers can see what they have to offer by providing practice activities. It also helps employers make accurate hiring decisions. Sometimes, a verbal interview gets you is a smooth talker anyway.

4. Having an accommodating workplace is key to success.

Being able to be flexible and adaptable to all while staying productive only makes a company strong-er and more impressive. Studies have shown that collaborative, dynamic workplaces are the most enduring.
EMPLOYERS and hiring managers receive hundreds if not thousands of CVs on a weekly basis. The letters CV stand for curriculum vitae which is Latin for ‘course of life.’

To make matters worse, Princeton psychologists Janine Willis and Alexander Todorov say, it only takes a tenth of a second to form an impression about a stranger’s face. The same can apply to your CV as well. It doesn’t take long for an employer or a hiring manager to scan your CV before forming an impression of you.

The reality is, reputable companies that receive many applications on a weekly basis, may use their basic judgement as the first filter in their hiring process. Although we were taught not to judge a book by its cover, the harsh reality is that we all do because of our human nature.

Preparing your CV can be a daunting task. A good CV is much more than readable fonts, attractive colours and a tidy layout. Although it is important to keep the above, they are merely the basics. You’ll probably never get a second chance to make a first great impression.

As hiring continues to increase, job seekers (especially fresh graduates) will face stiff competition this year. Here are four key rules that you should keep in mind when writing your CVs.

#1 KEEP IT REAL

A CV is simply an extension of yourself. It should paint a good picture of who you are in real life. It should paint a good picture of who you really are, and when that happens, you would have created a bad impression for yourself.

The best person to be is yourself. So, just be yourself, don’t be just another John Doe.

#2 KEEP IT CURRENT

When was the last time you updated your CV? Three, or maybe five years ago? Some say that you should update your CV every six to 12 months to add new skills and experiences.

But the ugly truth is, most people shelve their CVs the moment they are comfortably employed allowing it to collect dust. If this is you, you’d want to clean the dust off your CV and start updating it to land yourself a sweet new job.

Any software engineer will advise you to update your software to the latest version because of the impressive new features and benefits that come with it.

Similarly, you’d want your future employer or hiring manager to be equally impressed while reading your credentials and achievements. Old may not necessarily be gold. Impress them with your latest jobs, awards and achievements because it would reflect you well. Keep it as current as you can. Nobody likes to read a CV that you drafted five years ago.

#3 KEEP IT SHORT

“How many pages should my CV be?” This question seems to have a lot of answers to it. Some say one page is the safest, whereas some say not more than two.

Honestly, it all depends on the content of your CV. If you have 40 years of working experience, it is understandably difficult for you to fit everything in a one or even two-page CV. It is not realistic for you to do so. However, fitting your CV into a page is a good approach if you do not have any work experience or have had just one job since leaving school.

#4 KEEP IT ACCURATE

Confused between the usage of ‘you’re’ and ‘you’re’? Or between ‘than’ and ‘then’? Perhaps you’re unsure of when to use American or British English.

Simple spelling or grammatical errors can be the difference between getting a job and losing it! For example, it may seem obvious that you would or wouldn’t have spelt the person’s name correctly.

A simple but often overlooked procedure is to do a routine grammar and spell check before hitting the ‘SEND’ button. Go the extra mile by finding out the name he goes by in the office. It might turn out that Mr John doesn’t want to be called Mr Doe after all.

If you’re sending out a ton of applications at once, be sure to double and triple check that you’re sending the right CV to the right person and company.

Take the extra effort in adjusting your CV to tailor it to the specific job advert. The more precise and accurate you are, the higher the chances that your CV will land in the ‘accept’ tray.

#5. Do not include, “Won Nobel Peace Prize 2016” in your CV if it isn’t real.

Writing a CV is an on-going process. Like any masterpiece, it is a never finished work.

If possible, do keep your CV layout to two sides of an A4 paper. A common mistake we all do is reducing the font size and sub-headings to fit it all in.

Rather, find ways to paraphrase your sentences and points instead. Make use of columns, line breaks and bullet points. These subtle formatting tips can go a long way and make your CV more appealing to the hiring manager.

The best way to predict the future is to create it.

Writing a CV is an art. Like any art, it is a never finished work. It is a never finished work. It is an on-going process. Like any masterpiece, it is a never finished work.
GROW AND SCALE YOUR SME TO GREATNESS

SME CEO CONFERENCE 2017

A special conference for Chief Executive Officers, Managing Directors and Directors of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs).

This exclusive conference aims to help CEOs navigate beyond their pain points including slow growth, lack of scalability and declining margins and aims to equip them in finding solutions for their growth and scalability issues. The conference will include insights from prominent global leaders who have succeeded in growing their organisations, and thought leaders like Leaderonomics’ Roshan Thiran who will demonstrate the application of his Four Constraints model for SMEs.

TOPICS INCLUDE:
Leadership Secrets from the Big Leaders
Secrets from CEOs Who Grew Their SMEs to Greatness
Reinventing Your SME for Success: Storytelling and the Power of Brand

ABOUT LEADERONOMICS
Leaderonomics is a social enterprise dedicated to transforming developing nations through leadership development. We believe that leadership is what makes nations, organisations and communities great. Similarly, lack of leadership destroys and diminishes societies.

Our goal is to enable every single person to fulfil their potential as the leader they were meant to be. We dream of bringing leadership development to the remotest parts of developing nations, ensuring that everyone who aspires to be a leader, is provided the tools and processes to enable them to “build communities of love”.

SPEAKERS
An esteemed panel of prominent global leaders who have succeeded in growing their organisations will share their insights on how to leverage technology, keys to staying competitive in business, and explore ways to overcome the factors constraining businesses today.

HRDF CLAIMABLE. Subject to terms and conditions.
Submit your application under Skim Bantuan Latihan (SBL) prior to the commencement of the event using an online form at Electronic Transformed Information System (eTRIS) via www.hrdf.com.my

26 APRIL 2017
8.45AM — 6.00PM

VENUE: The Summit 1 Ballroom, Level M1, Connexion Conference & Event Centre, The Vertical, Bangsar South.

TICKET PRICE: RM500 per person

Get preview information on the programme when you register your interest at bit.ly/SMECEOregister
Call 019-3486413 or email smeconference@leaderonomics.com for details.