

# DESIGNING YOUR OWN SUCCESS

## HOW ONE YOUNG WOMAN GOT HER BUSINESS TO STANDOUT IN THE CREATIVE INDUSTRY

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**R**ECOGNISED as a young, female entrepreneur from Penang and for her growth-hacking abilities and unconventional approach to doing business, Goh Ai Ching, the chief executive officer (CEO) of Piktochart seems to have all the right formulas for a start-up.

The founder of the popular infographic design app was listed as a finalist for the MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) Technology Review magazine's 35 Innovators under 35 in 2014, and is a member of Forbes Technology Council.

Leaderonomics got the opportunity to have a chat with this energetic, inspiring yet humble leader to glean some valuable leadership lessons that she picked up while growing her business.

Some of us may have heard the story of how Goh and her co-founder and husband Andrea Zaggia grew Piktochart – a web app that helps non-designers create comprehensive and attractive infographics – into a profitable business without any external investments.

And it doesn't end there. The company recorded a whopping 8.7 million user-database in just five years, with 55% of their users based in the US and Canada.

### A CONTINUOUS JOURNEY OF LEARNING

Roshan Thiran, the CEO of Leaderonomics, once wrote about how amazed he was by Warren Buffett who finds the time to "read for hours every day in order to be on top of news, latest trends and developments, and what's happening in his business", despite his age and prodigious wealth.

Continuous learning not only broadens a leader's knowledge, but it also spurs their growth, opens doors to opportunities, and brings success to their business.

With no prior experience in managing an organisation, Goh began leading her own company at 26 and had to quickly master the art of leadership as her business was growing quickly.

When asked how she did it, she said: "It takes a lot of reading, praying and reflection."

However, no matter how much a leader reads, some things can only be learnt through experience.

When it comes to giving feedback to employees for instance, Goh constantly reflects to see if any of the characteristics that she observes in someone else, exists within her. Only then, she is able to give valuable feedback to her employees.

She admits that leaders may not always have the answer to everything, especially if they are working with people who know more than them.

Thus, leaders need to constantly upgrade themselves while respecting and empowering employees who may be better than them in certain areas.

### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MENTORING OTHERS

Jack Welch of General Electric has taught leaders that while a CEO's time is incredibly valuable, it is important for a leader to spend quality time with his or her employees and mentor them, to ensure they have the right understanding and capabilities to steer the business in the right direction. That is precisely what Goh is doing.

Besides mentoring her Piktochart employees, she and Zaggia conduct quarterly mentoring sessions for entrepreneurs and start-up founders, where external speakers are invited to share their stories for others to learn from.

While Goh may not have as many years of wisdom as other influential leaders out there, she believes in imparting the existing knowledge and experience she has gained unto others. She is also aiming to grow the start-up community in Penang.

### BRINGING IN THE RIGHT PEOPLE

Hiring intelligently is key to ensuring that not only your employees fit into the company culture, but are also able to drive performance that helps them grow with your business.

As some of Goh's employees work



Goh Ai Ching. Pic sourced from interviewee.

remotely in Europe, America and Asia, the obvious question was: how does she know what her employees are doing, and the hours they put in?

To this, Goh says: "It's about hiring right, having trust, and having the right processes and systems in place to ensure we are measuring the right things."

To her, it's not about the number of hours one puts in, but the outcome that really matters.

### SETTING THE RIGHT CULTURE

One of the key driving factors of culture in an organisation is its people. Because the core beliefs and values of people are usually quite consistent, it becomes necessary for leaders to ensure that each employee has values that are aligned to the company's values.

Staying consistent with this concept, Goh conveys that an ideal employee is someone who is not only smarter and better than others, but whose values are in line with the values that the company stands for.

One may ask, how does a leader know what the right culture is for their company?

To answer this, Goh talked about her first job. Due to a lack of a cultural fit and misaligned expectations, she was incredibly frustrated and burnt out, and eventually decided to leave.

As she couldn't go back to – or create – the same environment, Goh took extra care to ensure that everything her company stands for today, is the opposite of what she experienced in her first job.

"I merely took all of the good, and changed all of the things I didn't like," she says.

When asked to describe the culture at her company, Goh likened it to a family. With 53 employees under her belt (including the few who work remotely), she places a lot of importance on ensuring that her teams are constantly engaged.

Psst! Goh has a secret for young entrepreneurs. To learn what she has to say, direct your browser to [www.leaderonomics.com](http://www.leaderonomics.com) or scan the following QR Code to read the full article online.



WHETHER your business is big or small, every organisation has the desire to migrate from good to great and this starts with internalising a work culture that both leaders and employees can relate to. Leaderonomics can equip leaders with the right skills to create a high-performance culture that will translate your discipline into enterprising business results. We can also talk you through suitable coaching or mentoring skills that will add value to your leadership. Contact [training@leaderonomics.com](mailto:training@leaderonomics.com) for more details.

■ Prethiba is constantly amazed at how much leaders are able to teach us. She believes that the power to effect a positive and sustainable change comes from having good leaders. She knows for a fact that Malaysia can only be transformed into a developed nation with the presence of passionate, genuine and humble leaders like Goh. To share your thoughts with the writer, e-mail her at [prethiba.esvary@leaderonomics.com](mailto:prethiba.esvary@leaderonomics.com).

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– Janelle, Personnel Director

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