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!

5 CRUCIAL LESSONS FOR NEW MANAGERS
3 WAYS TO BUILD A GREAT TEAM
HOW ENGAGING MANAGERS CREATE IMPACT
CALLING YOUR FIRST SHOT

With a promotion, comes excitement, anticipation, big ambitions to make a difference and a laundry list of items to wade through – especially if it’s your first promotion or appointment to the role of a manager. This might have been your dream job, or the promotion that you’ve been waiting for all this while. And when it finally arrives, reality hits:

“IT’s time to call the shots! You will have to make decisions – including the tough ones – and begin to trust your own judgement. It’s no longer just about you. Your prowess at the job is not the only measurement anymore; it is about your team’s performance under your guidance.

Brickbats and praises: You will have to earn the trust and confidence of your team. And, you will have to take responsibility for the mistakes of others in your team, and accept it gracefully as you encourage your team to raise the bar and try again. Setting effective boundaries. Your former peers may be the people you now manage, and sitting on the other side of the table may make you the most comfortable spot to maintain the old office banter anymore.

As a first-time manager, the personal and professional ambitions you have long harboured for yourself may become altered, as you experience rookie mistakes all over again. And that’s okay, because while ensuring top performance in a brand new capacity, and taking ownership of results as well as the development of others, can feel a lot like having to dance on thin ice.

This week, we look at challenges faced by first-time supervisors, and the different perspectives to understanding team dynamics under the watch of a new manager. What do new managers need to understand in order to perform effectively within the larger view of the organisation, and lead their teams effectively? Joachim Sebastian shares five things that all new managers should know. Among them: being the bigger person, preparing for mistakes and not taking things personally. Read this on Page 3.

Every new manager’s primary concern is to be able to create an environment within which there is trust, confidence and reliability among their team members. Eva Christodoulou, Leaderonomics’ research and development leader, outlines three plans that can help managers make the most of their teams.

“Don’t forget that small teams make up the whole organisation, and ensuring that a team works well together and produces high quality work contributes to the overall success of a company,” she writes. Read more from this story on Page 5.

On Page 8, Matt Naylor writes about Big Dutchman, and how the organisation has made it a business decision to pay more attention to recognising the value of their people. Its Asia president, Jan Hofstede talks about why the company launched its Regional Management Development Programme (MDP) and how it would ensure that their employees become the best drivers to move the company forward.

“You can have the fanciest and most expensive car in the world, but without the right driver, it is useless,” he says.

And, if you’d like to know how to take your new leadership skills to the next level, Amanda Chua’s piece on Page 11 talks about how to be an engaging and effective new manager. One of the ways to do this, Chua writes, is to provide constant real-time feedback, communicate and clarify expectations, help manage priorities and keep their performance in check.

We hope this issue gives you with useful insight into the intricacies of first-time management, and if you have a personal story to share, write to us at editor@leaderonomics.com. In the meantime, wishing all our Muslim readers Selamat Hari Raya Aidilfitri, and have a blessed and joyous celebration!

Lydia Gomez
Editor

DOWNLOAD OUR AMAZING E-BOOK!

Featuring insightful articles by Jack Welch, John Maxwell, hostage negotiator Geo Kohriens and others. This e-book is available for FREE to everyone who wants to grow as a leader!

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!
When I began my entrepreneurial journey, it was quite a scary thing. Running a business with a team of three people posed a heavy workload issue. I would like to share some of the thought processes that I have come to embrace to survive my leadership journey.

**ATTRACTION TALENT**

One of the key issues every leader must overcome is the ability to attract and retain effective talents. We also have to accept that skilled talents will rarely cast their eyes on new companies as we do not have the right amount of visibility and pull factor.

One way you can overcome this issue is by communicating on the intangibles being offered with the job. We follow a strict five-day work week that starts and ends consistently. We also offer medical benefits for our employees and their families. This has proven to be a great tool to attract and retain talent especially once they utilise their medical benefit.

We also generally offer a higher than par entry salary for our employees. By doing this, we save in the long run in terms of attrition costs, retraining cost and loss of productivity. With our combined manpower strategy we have had only one worker resigning after three years in operations.

**BEING THE BIGGER PERSON**

When dealing with people, one needs to be humane. I learnt this principle from one of my mentors: be the bigger person. As a company — and head of business — we have to be accountable for our actions and absorb losses due to human error, events beyond our control, health issues and sales volatility.

This is something I learnt from one of my new hires. He was an experienced, talented individual and we needed him in our team. During the interview, he negotiated his basic salary based on the idea that we would be lowering our offer. Instead of negotiating, I decided to match my offer with his “expectation” and in return, I asked for his full commitment and contribution. He has been an amazing contributor so far.

These are instances where you can be the bigger person and elevate those around you to higher levels. Being petty and trying to save the company a few hundred ringgit is not the thought process of a true leader and entrepreneur.

**EMPLOYEES ARE PEOPLE TOO, DON’T TREAT THEM LIKE MACHINES**

Founders usually treat their start-ups like their own “babies”. Every company is precious. I remember spending hour after hour, day after day trying to expand and grow the company.

One thing to always remember is that your employees do not view the company in the same light. And that is a good thing. To create a sustainable environment for both yourself and your employees, you must accept the fact that 100% work output is unrealistic.

Workload output at 60% to 70% is already good. By trying to squeeze and absorb losses due to human error, events beyond our control, health issues and sales volatility.

I found that by allowing them to self-regulate by committing to deadlines and managing their own workloads, you can get more done. No one likes to be micromanaged.

**PREPARE FOR MISTAKES, PLAN FOR FAILURE**

A good leader will shine when they deal with issues and mistakes at the workplace. People make mistakes. This is one of the fundamental requirements of learning and innovating.

It is counterproductive to degrade, put down or abuse a person because of a mistake. You generally create unwanted anxiety, fear and resentment for everyone at work. A good leader does not resort to shaming or chiding others in order to make a point.

Our responsibility as a leader is to have a backup plan and a tolerance level established upfront with regard to work.

When working with people, we must understand that their daily output can be affected by a million different things; their children falling sick, loss in the family, money issues, and many others. It never hurts to be empathetic and understand the underlying reasons for errors and mistakes before responding.

Sometimes, someone just has a bad day.

**NEVER TAKE THINGS PERSONALLY**

When dealing with an irate or angry subordinate in the early years, I allowed myself to think and feel that I am being personally attacked and generally respond in an equally emotional way.

This usually escalates the situation and differences in hierarchy leaves the subordinate feeling wronged, helpless and unable to resolve the issue that he or she may be facing. This negativity will then express itself within the workplace environment.

After making many mistakes of this kind I realised the damage that I am doing to the culture of my organisation.

I started separating myself from the issue at hand. Practising outcome-based decision-making also helped tremendously. When we think of the issue at hand holistically and consider the possible outcomes before responding, we should be able to manage the situation appropriately and the best possible intervention or solution.

Bear in mind that different situations require different kinds of responses. If you are able to take a step back, evaluate and decide objectively, you will generally have better outcomes from each situation.

**SUMMARY**

Contrary to popular opinion, leadership is not a fun happy wonderful position to be in. It takes self-awareness, humility, empathy, responsibility, foresight and openness.

There is a valid reason to why it is called the “burden” of leadership. I am still very new to this thought process and I am still figuring out my own journey. I hope this piece helps you move along yours.
I learnt of this phrase, transferable skills, very early in my career. Par- tly because I read a lot, but also because circumstance conspired to read a lot, and this word became a key part of my career journey. The dictionary defines it as abilities and skills that are relevant and helpful across different areas of life, socially or professionally. I define it as the most important thing one should learn as you move up in your career.

Let me explain my career a bit. I started off as an electronics engineer which was great for my first job as a firmware engineer in the data storage industry, but it all became irrelevant from then on. This is more common than you would think, as Careerdigger in a 2013 study noted that 47% of college-educated workers had a first job that was outside their field.

Hence, the more urgent need to understand what works as you move across industries and job fields, as I’ve done in my career. When I moved back to Malaysia, I found myself without a job, and having to learn to programme and deliver software in the finance industry.

Funny story: During the interview, I was given a programming test. To which my reply was, “Give me a week to learn programming and I will be back.” Somehow it worked, and I came back in a week and got the job. I spent the whole week learning everything I could about VB6 (yes, I’m old).

That brings us to Lesson #1

Make sure you have a thirst to learn and that you learn fast. We live in a world that is moving faster than most can keep up with. There are plenty of articles out there about the need for people to re-skill as technology (in particular Artificial Intelligence) will replace most career choices.

The Future of Employment report predicts that 47% of total US employment is in the high-risk category of being replaced by automation. Even without moving careers, we will need to embrace fast learning as the No.1 transferable skill. This message was reinforced again for me when I read an article by Susan Peters, senior vice-president of HR at GE.

In describing the newly identified CEO for GE, after a six-year succession planning process, her first description was as follows: “In John Flannery, our company’s new leadership director of the Learning and Growth division in Leaderonomics. If you’d like to share your thoughts about this article, e-mail me at editor@leaderonomics.com.”

There are many other examples; the new leadership styles, a new software industry. Again, I felt like a fish out of water in the finance industry. The dictionary defines it as abilities and skills that are relevant and helpful across different areas of life, socially or professionally. I define it as the most important thing one should learn as you move up in your career.

The Future of Employment report predicts that 47% of total US employment is in the high-risk category of being replaced by automation. Even without moving careers, we will need to embrace fast learning as the No.1 transferable skill. This message was reinforced again for me when I read an article by Susan Peters, senior vice-president of HR at GE. In describing the newly identified CEO for GE, after a six-year succession planning process, her first description was as follows: “In John Flannery, our company’s new leadership

During the interview, it was obvious that I did not have the technical skills for the job, which required automation and PLC knowledge. (At that point, I wasn’t even sure how a PLC worked). To my surprise, I was offered the job two weeks later. I called back my inter- viewer to ask why, and to share my sur- prise at the decision. The answer was that I had the know-how to get the job done. They trusted that I had what it takes.

That was the first time I realised I could get hired for my leadership competencies and not for my functional competencies.

Leadership skills are transferable even when functional skills are not. Hence, leadership skills are the most important attribute you can develop.

The prospect of joining a company that was establishing a manufacturing presence in Malaysia and to be part of that pioneer team was too much for me to resist. I began a career in manufactur- ing automation, which brought me great satisfaction and success.

The leadership skills that I was hired for are generally the leadership competencies that you find in most companies. A good reference is to use the 20 ICF leadership competencies, which can eas- ily be mapped to most organisations’ needs.

Till today, I firmly believe in focusing on the competencies of leading self, lead- ing others, and leading organisations as a basis for success.

The next step in my career took me into the world of programme or project manage- ment and delivery in the supply chain industry. Again, I felt like a fish out of water as I had to learn a new culture, new leadership styles, a new software language, and a new project methodol- ogy not to mention a new industry.

The most jarring was the culture and style, as the company had grown rapidly from a start-up to an enterprise software company primarily with the same group of people.

As more people were hired from the outside, there were challenges in both culture assimilation as well as mis- matched expectations. I learnt my third lesson here.

Lesson #3

Open your mind to new possibilities and adapt quickly. Most people tend to bring their baggage with them, and as humans, show some bias with “how we used to do things”.

I learnt quickly to challenge myself to assimilate and accept the current best practices in the organisation.

Only after many months of assimila- tion, did I then try to reach back into my experience and challenge what I knew versus what I had learnt. You see, if you don’t give it a chance, most of us will wind up being biased with what worked for us before.

That bias makes adaptation slower and more challenging. It also leads to dis- satisfaction, either in the new hire or the existing employees, especially when you take on a leadership role.

We must approach all new experi- ences with an open mind. It’s important to bring your experience to bear on any new circumstances. But as the wise say, you should first strive to observe, listen and learn, before you speak. As the adage goes, that’s why we have two ears but only one mouth.

Those are the top three lessons that I learnt that will allow you to move into leadership roles in a new function or role, in a new organisation, in a new industry and still find success.

1. Passion for learning, and a fast learning curve.
2. Leadership skills – how you lead yourself, how you lead others, how you lead an organisation.
3. Adaptability and an open mind.

Now, convincing your interviewer of the same... well, that’s for another arti- cle.

It also starts with you believing that what you have is enough to bring to the table. Once you have the leadership competencies, you must have the self-belief that you will be able to help the organisation you seek to join – that you can do what it takes. You’ve got to start with that.

Sometimes it amazes me that people gave me the different opportunities that I had the privilege of experiencing.

But then I look back at how I interview people and observe how others conduct an interview and find the answer.

There is some basic functional skills that one usually tests for, as a baseline requirement, but it’s rarely what gets you the job. It’s the leadership skills that get you hired. It’s usually a specific set of competencies that people are looking for during an interview, at least at the more senior roles.

And these competencies are definitely transferable, as if I’ve learnt in my career, I leave you with a quote from Martin Yates’ Ultimate Job Search Guide:

“Regardless of profession or title, at some level we are all hired to do the same job. We are all problem solvers, paid to anticipate, identify, prevent, and solve problems within our areas of expertise. This applies to any job, at any level, in any organisation, anywhere in the world, and being aware of this is absolutely vital to job search and career success in any field.”
By EVA CHRISTODOULOU
eva.christodoulou@leaderonomics.com

TEAM managers, whether they are newly-promoted or experienced, face the gruelling task of bringing a team together and getting the members to deliver to the best of their ability. Their role is to direct, coach, advise, mentor, and even discipline where necessary.

It’s been a common practice in the working world and beyond, that in order to have a team that works effectively as part of a bigger machine, we would also require a manager – a leader who could provide direction or merely be the representative of the team to higher management in an institution. Or both.

How does a manager ensure that the team performs well? For one, we cannot overlook the fact that adjusting to the new role takes time – a new manager has to be responsible for the work of other people, and he or she is often the first to take the blame if team members mess up...

It takes patience, practice, and ample reflection to perfect the role of a team manager, especially if you are unfortunate enough to have a less-than-well collaborating group of people under you.

In this article, I would like to talk about building an effective team as well as some ideas for team managers to implement. Apart from the multitude of skills you will have to employ as a manager – delegation, coaching, managing performance, and many more – looking at the areas outlined below can allow every- thing else to have a higher impact.

Don’t forget that small teams make up the whole organisation, and ensuring that a team works well together and produces high quality work contributes to the overall success of a company.

At Leaderonomics, we believe that in order to help teams become high performing and effective at what they do, we need to take care of three components. Let’s look at the main elements of each component, and what we feel each team manager should look into to ensure they set their team up for success:

ACTION PLAN
What Castka, Bamber, Sharp and Belohoudek call system factors, the Action Plan is essentially about having clarity in the team. Clarity of purpose, objectives, as well as strategy to be able to achieve these. Managers, therefore, need to concentrate on the following areas:

- Defined focus for the team – Clarity on the purpose of the team, how it contributes to the organisation’s mission, what is the expectation in terms of output and impact, what the decision making process is, clarity on the team and project goals, as well as the strategy to get there.
- Alignment and interaction with external entities – Explicit knowledge on what kind of information flow is necessary, and how to ease the flow between teams within the organisation, or external stakeholders such as clients.

Organisational impact – Understanding how the team contributes to the organisation as a whole, and also what the team needs from the organisation in order to work effectively. Team members must also be able to see how their contribution makes a positive impact to the organisation’s goals.

- Measures of performance – Understanding how the team gets measured, and how clearly these measurements are communicated.
- Competency – Staffing the team with the right people that have the necessary skills (or at least mindset) that are needed for their work.
- Individual performance of team members – Understanding the personal capacity of team members, and how this affects their output of work as well as their relationships with other members.

Team size – Looking at the size of the team and the role the team has to play in order to determine whether the team is of the right size.

Other elements to consider are: colour of team mates and how it affects their work, workload size, and tenure of the team as a unit as well as individuals.

ENGAGEMENT PLAN
Loosely correlating to Castka, Bamber, Sharp and Belohoudek’s human factors, the Engagement Plan has to do with the needs of the individuals within the team, and how comfortable they feel there. It is possible that the ‘conditions’ may vary significantly across teams within the same organisation, even when a company feels it has a strong company-wide culture.

Looking at the following areas will therefore help a manager assess where there needs to be more emphasis in their own team.

- Psychological safety – Amy Edmondson of Harvard University introduced the term psychological safety, in the context of learning. She defined psychological safety as “a shared belief held by members of the team that the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking”. In fact, psychological safety was found to be the most crucial element of high performing teams in Google’s Project Aristotle. In her TEDx talk, Edmondson offers three simple things individuals can do to foster team psychological safety: frame the work as a learning problem, not an execution problem, acknowledge their own fallibility, and model curiosity and ask lots of questions.

- Organisational impact – Understanding how the team contributes to the organisation as a whole, and also what the team needs from the organisation in order to work effectively. Team members must also be able to see how their contribution makes a positive impact to the organisation’s goals.

- Measures of performance – Understanding how the team gets measured, and how clearly these measurements are communicated.
- Competency – Staffing the team with the right people that have the necessary skills (or at least mindset) that are needed for their work.
- Individual performance of team members – Understanding the personal capacity of team members, and how this affects their output of work as well as their relationships with other members.

Team size – Looking at the size of the team and the role the team has to play in order to determine whether the team is of the right size.

Other elements to consider are: colour of team mates and how it affects their work, workload size, and tenure of the team as a unit as well as individuals.

ENGAGEMENT PLAN
Loosely correlating to Castka, Bamber, Sharp and Belohoudek’s human factors, the Engagement Plan has to do with the needs of the individuals within the team, and how comfortable they feel there. It is possible that the ‘conditions’ may vary significantly across teams within the same organisation, even when a company feels it has a strong company-wide culture.

Looking at the following areas will therefore help a manager assess where there needs to be more emphasis in their own team.

- Psychological safety – Amy Edmondson of Harvard University introduced the term psychological safety, in the context of learning. She defined psychological safety as “a shared belief held by members of the team that the team is safe for interpersonal risk-taking”. In fact, psychological safety was found to be the most crucial element of high performing teams in Google’s Project Aristotle. In her TEDx talk, Edmondson offers three simple things individuals can do to foster team psychological safety: frame the work as a learning problem, not an execution problem, acknowledge their own fallibility, and model curiosity and ask lots of questions.

- Organisational impact – Understanding how the team contributes to the organisation as a whole, and also what the team needs from the organisation in order to work effectively. Team members must also be able to see how their contribution makes a positive impact to the organisation’s goals.

- Measures of performance – Understanding how the team gets measured, and how clearly these measurements are communicated.
- Competency – Staffing the team with the right people that have the necessary skills (or at least mindset) that are needed for their work.
- Individual performance of team members – Understanding the personal capacity of team members, and how this affects their output of work as well as their relationships with other members.

Team size – Looking at the size of the team and the role the team has to play in order to determine whether the team is of the right size.

Other elements to consider are: colour of team mates and how it affects their work, workload size, and tenure of the team as a unit as well as individuals.
BRIDGING THE GAP TO SUCCESS

HRDF’S MYFUTURE DIAGNOSTIC TOOL HELPS RATE SME MATUREITY

**ENHANCING THE SME STATUS**

The SME Masterplan is a “game changer” that accelerates the growth of SMEs in the country, states Muhammad Ghazali Abdul Aziz, HRDF’s chief special purpose organisation for the implementation of the SME Masterplan to 2020. The SME Masterplan outlined 32 initiatives across five fundamental goals, comprising six High Impact Programmes (HIPs). To date, over 27,000 SMEs are participating in the HIPs, with over RM26 million spent on the domestic product contributions by SMEs from the current 26.3% to 42%, and non-monetary engagement and retention rate to 65% in the three years.

To address the two major concerns which are productivity and innovation, attention must be given to the growth of our local human capital – this includes intervention programmes like training and development.

“The size may be big in the SME Masterplan and wanting to come up with an innovative programme that will achieve government’s goals and create SME champions in the process. That’s why MyFuture was introduced,” says Muhammad Ghazali Abdul Aziz (better known as Chaz). Chaz adds that since SMEs grow, there should be greater focus on their people. “When you’re looking at improving your market potential, you need to be able to link HR and training to your business,” says Chaz, explaining that this will ensure a strategic and forward-thinking framework in place for businesses to most.

MyFuture focuses on – and diagnoses – three areas of concern: the current state of HR, the engagement and retention, and performance.

**CHALLENGES FACING THE SME**

Level 1 – There are absolutely no HR policies or processes in place altogether

Level 2 – HR policies and processes are formalised

Level 3 – HR policies and processes are operational

Level 4 – HR processes drive business

“We believe that there is a clear divide between organisations who have well-thought-out HR systems in place and those that are just ticking off the boxes. TheMyFuture Diagnostic Tool is a guide to where the organisation is and what are the gaps so organisations can close critical opportunities gaps and uplift the local workforce, Chaz explained.

For this to happen, businesses must have the capacity to diagnose organisational needs and gaps that may impact scalability – and from there, productively – and address them accordingly through the right interventions and programmes. However, an accurate diagnosis cannot be made by just anyone. It is a role of its own and requires the appropriate expertise at an additional cost.

**HR MATURITY MODEL**

SMEs are categorised as Level 1, 2, 3, and 4, with Level 4 being the stage for businesses to grow. MyFuture helps SMEs choose the right intervention for their business that can result in high impact business outcomes.

To participate in MyFuture, SMEs need to submit the following information:

- MyCallID (business registration number)
- Company name
- Company’s business address
- Company’s contact number
- Number of employees

**MYFUTURE ENGAGEMENT PROCESS**

**STAGE 1**

Send a formal e-mail to indicate interest

**STAGE 2**

HRDF will follow up with a call or e-mail to secure participation

**STAGE 3**

An account is created for the participating SME and a survey link is sent

**STAGE 4**

HRDF monitors progress and follows-up with phone calls

**STAGE 5**

Upon completion, few SMEs are invited for focus group discussions

**STAGE 6**

Needed data is gathered and analysed and findings are validated through discussions

**STAGE 7**

A firm report is generated and consultation session is scheduled

**IMPACT**

- Data from focus groups can help formulate national recommendations for SME enhancement on a major scale.
- The final report can assist SMEs in decision-making and investing in human capital interventions.

**MYFUTURE QUICK FACTS**

1. All data (both personalising and service) are eligible for MyFuture diagnostic tool

2. SMEs and small businesses. Participating SMEs should have a minimum of 10 employees to a maximum of 200 employees for the manufacturing sector and less than 20 employees for the service-oriented businesses

3. Over 200 companies have benefited through MyFuture. These include successful case studies from businesses to be of international standard

4. All personal data are protected under Personal Data Protection Act 2020

5. Diagnostic is fully conducted online

**GATEWAY TO MYFUTURE e-PROFILING**

- User Account Setup
- Step 1: Create a profile
- Step 2: Click on the hyperlink “Here” to activate your account
- Step 3: Log in using the password provided in the e-mail
- Step 4: Complete all steps

**GUIDE TO MYFUTURE Engagement Process**

- Stage 1: Receive account activation e-mail from hrmd@myfuture.com.my
- Stage 2: Click on the hyperlink “Here” to activate your account
- Stage 3: Log in using the username and password provided in the e-mail
- Stage 4: Complete all steps
- Stage 5: Create a profile
- Stage 6: ‘click to complete survey
- Stage 7: Click “Save Survey Response” to submit the profiling

**STAGE 8**

Receive a report that will include suggestions for training interventions suitable with your current business practices.
IS THERE UNTAPPED POTENTIAL WITHIN YOUR ORGANISATION?

BIG DUTCHMAN UNVEILS REGIONAL MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME FOR EMPLOYEES

By MATT NAYLOR
matt.naylor@leaderonomics.com

Why do many companies historically dedicating their strategies to a great business model, a unique selling point (USP) and market share, a new pattern has emerged in which organisations are paying more attention to recognising the value of their people.

As Big Dutchman Asia president, Jan Hofstede puts it. “You can have the fanciest and most expensive car in the world, but without the right driver, it is useless.” That is to say that no matter what processes and structure you have in place, it is ultimately the working standards of your talent that will be the greatest determiner of your success.

That is why Big Dutchman has launched its Regional Management Development Programme (MDP) to ensure that its employees become the best drivers to help the company move forward. As an organisation that has always valued internal growth, the new programme will meet the development needs of its people.

CULTURE OF GROWTH

Where previously many people spent their entire career working in the same field or even in the exact same job, today’s fast-moving marketplace sees greater flexibility of staff willing to take on new roles. Given the right circumstances, the new role often energies both the employee and the company.

During his time with Big Dutchman, Hofstede has seen plenty of employees knocking on his door and asking for a fresh start in a new department.

“We have a motto around here, which is ‘let’s try it for a year’,” he said.

“If one of the employees comes to me and says that he or she would like to switch departments or take on a new role, we will give the person that opportunity. After a year, if it’s not working, we can review it and see if the person would be better going back to his or her previous position. But I believe in giving people that freedom.”

To use a football analogy, Arsene Wenger purchased a young left winger from Juventus in 1999, but saw the potential in him to be a prolific goalscorer if he is made striker.

During his time at Arsenal, Thierry Henry would then go on to score 175 Premier League goals, becoming the highest-scoring foreign player in the league’s history.

Could the next Thierry Henry be waiting in your company but stuck in the wrong role?

Those hidden gems within an organisation can too often be overlooked by many leaders today, who tend to hire somebody with experience externally, then giving an existing talent the opportunity.

One person at Big Dutchman who has seen no shortage of mobility across departments is Ewan Tong, who is also part of the newly launched MDP.

Joining the company as a fresh-faced university graduate 12 years ago, Tong worked in sales coordination, before taking on a variety of roles and ultimately attaining his current position as director of customer solutions.

“Of course, one does not get to the role I am in now without some luck, but also somebody believing in you and giving you the opportunities,” he admits.

“The guidance that I have received during my time here is what has helped me to develop and grow myself professionally.”

FREEDOM TO MAKE MISTAKES

Naturally, any new role will come with its share of teething problems. Thierry Henry failed to score in his first eight games in an Arsenal shirt, but Wenger never lost faith in the young Frenchman.

Similarly at Big Dutchman, Hofstede has always believed in giving his employees that responsibility to make their own mistakes and learn from them.

“We give people a lot of freedom and opportunities to try to maximise their potential. People will make mistakes, but so long as you don’t make the same mistake twice then that is not necessarily a problem. If you don’t make a mistake, you don’t learn,” he said.

And Tong admits that his road to the top has not always been a straight path, with plenty of learning experiences along the way.

“I have never been micromanaged here. The management believes in trusting their people and giving them the freedom to do their job,” he said.

“When I have needed him, Hofstede has always been there to offer the encouragement and advice that gave me the confidence to do my job. I may have had some stumbling blocks along the way, but without those, I wouldn’t have learnt the lessons that I have.”

EMPLOYEES GROWING WITH THE COMPANY

Naturally, in today’s fast-paced business landscape, companies are having to change rapidly to keep up with the times.

Whether this is a revamp of approach or internal structures, the need to innovate and alternate is greater than ever.

For long-serving employees in an organisation, this will undoubtedly mean that they have seen their fair share of upheavals throughout their tenure. Many are richer and wiser for the experiences.

Allowing your employees to grow with the company and become a part of that journey is essential towards building professional pride and engagement.

With the expansion of Big Dutchman globally and in order to keep pace with the top employers in the region, the company has recognised its need to continually upskill its talent. Ever the HR innovators, the new programme’s impact is expected to be felt for years to come.

In his 25 years at the helm of Big Dutchman Asia, Hofstede has overseen no shortage of changes with huge growth in the company both regionally and globally.

Joining in the early 90s, Hofstede was one of only three employees at the Asia branch at the time. Today, there are over 300 workers in their stunning office on the outskirts of Sota Alam.

“We always believe that with the right people in place, we can continue to capture our growth and find other ways to get bigger,” he said.

“There is always more market out there for us to grab, but it will be the people here that determine how we go about that, which is why we have always been people-centric.”

Commercial operations personal assistant Jase Chin is another MDP participant and a long-serving member of Big Dutchman. At that time, she was one of only four sales coordinators and she has held various positions within the company since joining them in 2002.

“Fifteen years ago, when I first joined this company I never could’ve imagined I’d be where I am now,” she said.

“There has been a lot of change in that time, for both myself and the company but they have always believed in me strongly.”

“I have seen myself grow a lot over the years thanks to the opportunities that have been given to me. Even after 15 years, I am still learning and seeing the company grow,” she added.

As your company progresses, so do your employees. Give them that chance to grow and share in the journey.

Whether it is recognising the untapped potential within the organisation or giving them the freedom to make mistakes, your people are your best asset.

They are the ones that will be driving the car. So, hand them the keys and watch them accelerate.
**The World of Social E-Learning**

By Geetha Bai Paramasivan

The modern workplace is a constantly changing environment where the challenges are dynamic and agile becomes the key to survival. Agility and the ability to adapt are important to ensure that the workforce is equipped to handle changes. It's more crucial now than ever that workplaces consider more collaborative ways of working, to find answers to questions that cannot be answered by individuals working in isolation.

As more learning opportunities present themselves in the workplace, a collaborative environment allows for troubleshooting, problem-solving, design implementation, research and development, as well as innovation to find answers and solutions even in the absence of a coach or mentor. Ideally, a direct result of this would be an improvement in workplace productivity while the people within the organisation are constantly growing.

One of the most influential learning theories is the social learning theory, first introduced by psychologist Albert Bandura in 1977, who integrated the concepts of cognitive learning theory and behavioural learning theory to come up with four requirements for learning. These requirements are learning through observation, retention, reproduction and motivation. In a nutshell, social learning is the simple concept of people learning from each other through attention, memory and motivation.

This theory explores the idea that there is a social element to learning, albeit a rather informal method of learning that determines its effectiveness. The social media boom has been a huge driving factor in propagating eLearning. While in the past, eLearning was created to centre on engaging and interactive multimedia content, it often lacked the benefits of informal learning resulting from human interaction. In fact, social learning management systems leverage on this by taking a more social approach to learning.

Social learning management systems act as a social intranet that allows users to gain knowledge by using the content provided on the platform as well as by sharing their own knowledge and experience on the platform. This opens avenues for collaborative discussions and communication that benefits the organisation as a whole by facilitating interdepartmental knowledge exchange.

Employees who have sufficient access to interaction with their peers are able to work more efficiently to solve their problems. Employee motivation improves when they are able to weigh in or take charge in troubleshooting problems to look for solutions faced by their organisations, whether through discussion or collaboration.

The simple act of facilitating employee engagement helps to zero in on areas that require improvement within the organisation. There are numerous benefits of social eLearning and by providing the right environment, users have the opportunity to a more flexible learning structure either with or without a structured curriculum framework.

This non-structured learning occurs towards social eLearning that is geared towards a more collaborative mechanism. This way, users who would normally experience time and geographical differences are able to communicate without constraint. Users can swap information, share tips and tools, exchange knowledge as well as collaborate on projects and papers.

With the correct voice and video tools, eLearning and by providing the right eLearning and by providing the right social eLearning becomes highly collaborative, transcending distance and time. Organisations too can leverage on the features of social learning platforms by using it as a virtual notice board of sorts for events, training sessions, and also post updates of on goings and organisational changes.

With the right set of rules and guidelines, employees not only have the benefit of keeping abreast of the developments within the organisation but are also able to post feedback and suggestions.

This works in the favour of the organisation as it allows real-time feedback, and in turn increases efficiency and productivity.

**By Rajiv Jayaraman**

**Editor@leaderonomics.com**

AUTHOR Charles Duhigg in his fascinating book, The Power of Habit, relates a fascinating story of how a new consumer habit was created through the sheer brilliance of a man named Claude C. Hopkins. In the early 1900s, Hopkins got an interesting assignment. His friend wanted him to run a nationwide promotional campaign for what seemed like a revolutionary product at that time. It was a minty, frothy oral care product called “Pepsodent.”

Hopkins, incidentally, has the reputation of turning many previously unknown products – Quaker oats, Goodyear tyres, Bissell carpet sweepers, Palmolive soap – into household names.

During his illustrious career, Hopkins came up with a series of rules to create new habits among consumers. Hopkins’ rules are now used to influence consumers into buying a whole variety of things – from software tools to kitchen appliances. Learning is perceived as a chore.

The assignment of making Pepsodent a household brand was that hardly anyone back then brushed their teeth despite a serious decline of national dental health. Only 7% of Americans were using toothpaste. Hopkins finally gave in to his friend’s persistence and decided to take the challenge by its homes. A decade after the first Pepsodent campaign, Hopkins had helped establish brushing teeth as a daily activity for close to 65% of the population.

So what was the trick? He applied his deep understanding of human psychology and how we form habits. We respond to a trigger or a cue that prompts us to get into a routine, which in the end gives us a reward.

It can be extrinsic in nature including an award, bonus or an intrinsic one, the sheer delight of the act itself. The reward creates an innate need to look out for similar cues in the future. So, in effect, a habit loop is created.

In his case, he helped consumers find a simple and obvious cue – “the film on teeth that we feel when we roll-run our tongue over our teeth. He clearly defined the rewards – “beautiful smile”. Using this, he influenced millions to start brushing and in the process, use Pepsodent.

The key question for us professionals in the L&D space is this: What does it take to make learning a habit? The fact that learning is fundamental to survival and growth is well understood by professionals across levels. However, the reality is that a lot of effort from the L&D department goes into pushing learning programmes and conveying the benefits of the same, mostly in vain. Learning is perceived as a chore by the learners. In other words, it is not seen as a rewarding habit.

The solution? Don the hat of Hopkins and approach the problem from a marketing angle. The need exists but the habit is not formed yet. The task is now cut out for L&D professionals. We need to make learning a craving and eventually a well-formed habit.

WONDER how you can make learning a habit. Read the full article on www.leaderonomics.com or scan the following QR Code.
Women can make a difference being right where they are
HOW TO BE AN EFFECTIVE AND ENGAGING NEW MANAGER

By AMANDA CHUA
amanda.chua@leaderonomics.com

CONGRATULATIONS! You have been promoted to manager. However, for some, this may not be a positive news or a desired upward career progression. Despite the well-remunerated managerial position and professional opportunities it promises, there are individuals who rather stay in their current role and prefer not to move up to managerial positions.

Being a manager is an entirely different ballgame, with it being one of the most stressful and challenging transitions in any career due to the significant change in working styles, habits, and most importantly – managing a group or workforce.

Your initial script which got you promoted as a leader, focusing mainly on “me” and “my” success as an individual contributor may not be exactly what is needed for you to be an effective manager.

It is now about “we” and the collective group success whereby part of your success is largely hinged on the contribution of others.

Having an engaging manager is paramount, as it is said, “People don’t quit their jobs, they quit their bosses.” Much of employees’ experiences and engagement levels are created by their direct managers to intentionally foster healthy relationships connecting with each employee with frequent feedback and constant communication.

Yet, 75% of employees end up being disengaged due to dissatisfaction with their direct bosses which ultimately leads to a decrease in productivity and morale with higher likelihood of absenteeism and resignation.

With all the evidence pointing towards the need for an engaged manager, here are four fundamental engagement strategies to create an engaged team of your own:

1. IDENTIFY TALENT FOR THE FIT

Knowing how to identify the suitable talent to match the role is important as the right job-fit improves engagement and maximises performance. By knowing our talents and how we are naturally wired, we would know where to best invest our time and effort for higher chances towards success, instead of a one-size-fits-all approach that does not lead to full engagement.

One of the ways to identify talents is by knowing your team’s strengths. Gallup’s Clifton Strengths believes that when we build our strengths, our performance exponentially increases even without focusing on managing our weaknesses. People who focus on their strengths are six times as likely to be engaged at work which leads to higher learning gains, lower turnover and greater productivity.

Consider your team member’s talents in mind when managing your team with these questions: “Do your team members have the chance to do their best work each day? Are your team members working on what they are strong at or their tasks are randomly assigned? Do you know about and understand your team strengths?”

As managers, we can leverage on strengths by providing each team member the opportunity to operate from where their strength lies with the opportunity to further develop them on their jobs. Identifying your team’s unique talents would also build a stronger team as it enables the team to build relationships and work better with one another.

2. BE A GREAT MANAGER BY SETTING EXPECTATIONS FOR HIGH PERFORMANCE

A manager’s primary responsibility is to lead and inspire team towards performance but many managers do not own the task of helping team members set and achieve their goals. Without knowing what is expected of them, employees struggle to be effective at work.

Great workplaces have managers who define the right key results and performance outcomes in line with the organisation’s direction and strategies. Doing this with the team members from the onset does not only define the job scope but also what success looks like on the job.

“A manager is 100% accountable for results of that 80% is delegated” which indicates that a huge responsibility of the outcome lies within the manager for performance. For this to be successful, expectations established would have to be at the top of their mind with the right performance management mechanism and support in place.

Employees also need to know if they are performing well and on the right track to meet the required standards. A great manager would enable this by providing frequent real-time feedback with constant communication and regular check-ins to clarify expectations, help manage priorities and keep their performance in check.

No one goal setting is the same where each may have their own route towards attaining those desired outcomes. About 69% of employees are more engaged when their managers are involved in the goal-setting process.

A collaborative approach customised according to the individual’s aspiration and development path builds ownership and inspires performance.

Employees are also more willing to experiment, be innovative and try new things when the manager communicates confidence in their direct reports with the freedom and autonomy to reach their objectives.

Conversations on expectation setting and measures of performance can begin with these questions, “What are the measures used to evaluate the performance of our team and of each other? How do I set objectives with my team? How often do I sit down with my team members and discuss their progress?”

To learn what the other engagement strategies are, go to www.leaderonomics.com for the full article. Alternatively, scan the following code

KICK START YOUR TEAM’S PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

It’s never too soon for a company to invest in personnel development

With Leaderonomics Digital Learning, you can start upskilling your team today from just RM1,000 a month. Our flexible learning programmes are delivered online, enhanced by multimedia content. What’s more, CourseNetworking’s unique, gamification-enabled learning management system also doubles up as a great social platform to share news and content internally within the company.

To get a free demo, email learn@leaderonomics.com
PREPARE YOUR MANAgERS FOR THE ROAD AHEAD

60% of new managers underperform during their first two years. Don’t be a statistic. Give your new managers their best shot with our First Time Managers Programme, an exciting integrated course with gamified sessions, digital simulations, mobile learning, action projects, and more. Designed to support the crucial turn that an associate’s career takes on becoming a manager, this award-winning programme is brought to you by Leaderonomics, powered by KNOLSKAPE.

Email info@leaderonomics.com to build a solid foundation for your future leaders