CELEBRATING THE UNSUNG HEROES AMONG US

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Sandy Clarke is the former managing editor of www.leaderonomics.com and a freelance writer with Leaderonomics.com currently. The Leaderonomics Show is a weekly show featuring prominent global leaders hosted by Roshan Thiran. To watch other great guests who have appeared on the show, including Robert Kiyosaki, Ram Charan, and a freelance writer for more information on the Willow Creek Association visit www.willowcreek.com

Gary Schwammlein shares how he brings top global leaders together to inspire others.

In the Christian Gospels, Jesus makes reference to laying foundations of rock upon which all else can be built, secured and able to withstand the roughest storms. As one of history's most influential leaders, this spiritual message from Jesus — that we should build ourselves from within — drives the efforts of the Willow Creek Association (WCA), a Christian organisation based in Illinois, US, that seeks to transform lives through leadership development.

The association's president and CEO Gary Schwammlein spoke about the importance of leadership on The Leaderonomics Show with host Roshan Thiran, citing John Maxwell's well-known mantra that "everything rises and falls on leadership.

Joining the WCA in 1996, Schwammlein spent 17 years as the association's executive vice-president, leading its international department with activities in 100 countries. In August 2013, he became president and set his team on an ambitious goal — to have 500,000 people attending the WCA's Global Leadership Summit by 2020. The summit is a two-day annual leadership event that is broadcasted from Willow's campus every August. World-class leaders are invited to speak at the summit, and throughout autumn there are related events which take place in 128 countries worldwide.

Although organised by a community church, WCA's summit invites speakers of all faiths and beliefs to share and teach leadership, and sees many thousands of people from other faiths attend the event in order to develop their own leadership skills and personal growth. In 2016, the target of reaching 500,000 attendees was reached, seeing an impressive increase of 72,000 people from the previous year. Amongst the speakers at their annual summit include John Maxwell, former GE CEO Jack Welch, famous author Patrick Lencioni, former Ford and Boeing CEO Alan Mulally and other global icons.

Commenting on the summit's purpose, Schwammlein says, “We focus on two things — to teach leadership and reach the maximum number of people through our conference. We also try to do workshops throughout the year to deepen what they have learned at the conference itself.”

Part of the reason for the success of the WCA is its commitment to inclusion and diversity in the people it reaches. While the association is proudly Christian-centred, its senior management team recognises that good leadership comes from all walks of life. As Schwammlein says, “Leadership is fairly neutral. It’s like Christian music — there’s no ‘Christian’ music, there’s music and some of it has Christian lyrics or text to it. It’s the same with leadership: leadership is leadership.”

“Probably one of the greatest leaders who ever lived, and is acknowledged pretty much anywhere around the world, is Jesus Christ. We can learn a lot from his leadership principles, but we have leaders who have accomplished great things in the marketplace, the military, education, church, business — you name it. There’s also an emphasis on challenging people’s ideas and beliefs, with the hope that it will help them to build a better foundation within themselves upon which solid leadership can be built.”

“Trends that we are seeing in the marketplace, the military, education, church, business and industry, the marketplace, etc. are so many social challenges that are calling out for attention — so why does the WCA choose to focus specifically on leadership?”

“Good leaders make education better,” says Schwammlein, “good leaders build better churches, good leaders are better in the military, in the government — leadership is the key to any great development and that’s something we’ve seen throughout history. So leadership matters, it really matters.”

With around 45 years of significant leadership roles under his belt, Schwammlein has enjoyed his own transformative experience over the years — although he admits that there were challenges along the way, having worked in global multinational organisations all over the world.

He says, “In my early days, I did the best I could and sometimes that was terrible. So of course, I have learned a lot in leadership. I grew up in a German household and wasn’t taught to praise people. I was never, in my whole life, praised by my parents when I did something good, and that affects you.

We know from leadership that if you do not praise other people, your leadership will only go to a certain level. So that’s something I had to learn to do with my children, to acknowledge and praise when they did something good, and praise other people when they do great work. It’s just one of so many things I learned through my years of leadership.”

Having learned so much about leadership across four decades, Schwammlein is keen to stress that culture within an organisation is vital to its success, and he encourages leaders to ensure they invest in their efforts in cultivating a strong sense of unity and cohesion.

“Culture really matters. In most companies, culture is undervalued and gets paid lip-service. Culture and values might be the company websites, but it’s not practised, it’s not rewarded, and it’s not penalised. In my opinion, one of the greatest tools you can have is having a great culture. As the saying goes, culture eats strategy for breakfast every time.”

Everything rises and falls on leadership.

BY SANDY CLARKE
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For more information on the Willow Creek Association visit www.willowcreek.com

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Where big ideas matter
By JESSLYN LAI
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THERE are people who are invisible to the world. The jobs they do go unnoticed for various reasons, but without them, there will be disorder and chaos. Every organisation has such back-end workers who silently support the company’s functional and operational aspect.

My primary school teacher once told me a story that I remember until today. Through her story, she illustrated the difference between a rubbish collector and a king. In our society, no one would willingly choose to become a rubbish collector, a sweeper or a cleaner. These jobs are often seen as dirty and low class whereas a king is highly honoured, served with the best of the best and receives royal treatment wherever he goes.

She then asked, what would happen if both the king and the rubbish collector stopped working for a month. Yes, the king is needed to maintain order in the nation but the rubbish collector has a very pertinent role to play too. Imagine what would happen if our trash does not get sorted for a month. Not only is our health in danger but so is the country’s reputation. Health, well-being, businesses, tourism and much more get affected.

Yet, do we bother acknowledging those who work hard to keep our country clean—regardless of whether they’re locals or foreigners? These are among the invisible heroes that we should celebrate, or at least respect.

There is a small community of former rubber tappers living in longhouses that are located close to my housing area in Petaling Jaya. There’s a woman—from the community—who comes by my area regularly, to collect recyclable items. My father took notice of this and decided to build a wire mesh basket to place all our recyclable wastes so she can collect them easily.

My mother on the other hand, would pack pre-loved clothes and instead of donating it to charity, give them away to our neighbours’ maids. It was a small gesture but it made the maids so happy! One scorching hot day, I was craving for some cold juice. It had been stored in the refrigerator for a few days but I never really fancied it until that day. When I got home, I immediately hit the fridge only to learn that it was all gone. Clearly annoyed, I asked my parents what happened to the juice boxes only to learn that my parents gave them away to some road sweepers who swung by our backyard and asked for some drinking water. My frustration immediately subsided. I was in awe as I then realised my parents are great role models.

At the end of our lives, we won’t be remembered for the deadlines that we’ve met or deals we’ve closed but we will be remembered for our loving gestures. As the saying goes, people may not remember what you’ve done but they will always remember how you made them feel.

If it’s not for their kind and friendly gestures, I wouldn’t have learned to appreciate the underappreciated. What they’ve done are simple and random acts of kindness but it left a big impact on me. These acts makes you grateful and helps you see the story behind everything we enjoy in our lives today. Even the nice weather daily has a story of sweat and sacrifice behind it. There’s always something that is more than meets the eye.

Growing up, I was initially inspired by videos and acts of kindness that heightened my awareness and inculturated a deep desire to do the same—notice the unnoticed, appreciate those we so often miss out, and do something nice for people occasionally.

I’ve always been surrounded by such people who make a difference but don’t realise that they do. I’ve seen them greet security guards, toilet cleaners, cashiers and waiters by name. These people make it a point to get to know others who serve them, they initiate conversations and even go the extra mile by giving them something on special occasions. It shows a personal initiative to adopt an internalised practice that is centred around love and leadership. It is selfless in nature because there are no hidden reasons that facilitate such acts.

We can emulate such examples anywhere, even at our workplace. Small gifts, little handwritten notes, or just taking that five minutes to listen to a colleague who’s struggling with work can impact our environment, or our relationship with our colleagues.

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So, whether you call it acts of kindness or personal practice and principles, I hope this article has encouraged you to continue doing and appreciating these little things. I can assure you that a simple “thank you” can go a long way. Your acts may remain unseen but their impacts are visible to the heart’s eye.

APPRECIATING THE UNSUNG HEROES
HOW RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS CAN LEAVE A LASTING IMPACT

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Photo by Jesslyn Lai.

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THERE IS STILL ROOM TO GROW.

Are you a CEO wanting to grow your SME business? With our unique FOUR-CONSTRAINTS MODEL we can help you identify the ONE key gap in the organisation that can catalyze your growth, and strengthen your brand while we’re at it.

Contact our SME growth specialist Michael at +60 18-355 7183 or michael.oghene@leaderonomics.com to get a free consultative session.
By PRETHIBA ESVARY
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EARLY every time my mum is about to pur-
chase a new product, the first question she poses to
the salesperson will be:

“Where was this product made?”

Product quality and having great value-for-money are key, of course, but does it really matter where something was made?

We sometimes fail to see the value created by lesser known brands or products. What’s disheartening is that people forget that in most cases, the successes of these so-called superior brands could not have been accomplish-
ed without the ones that bring it all together behind the scenes.

I recently discovered the inner workings of two Malaysian companies. Their stories below will help illustrate what I mean.

**IX TELECOM**

What do you do when your Internet is down? Look for the IT department, right?

They then contact the telecommunications provider to issue a complaint. Problem solved. Fast forward a few minutes and the same thing takes place.

Now, what if I told you that there is a way for local telco providers to gain access to faster, more reliable, and more secure Internet access?

Enter IX Telecom (IX) — a home-grown nine-year-old start-up that acts as an enabler by integrating Client X’s network with that of other companies around the globe.

How? By purchasing “IP transit” or bandwidth, a critical aspect that influences Internet speeds, from global telco providers.

By managing the international communication channels of, say Airline A, with airports worldwide. By doing so, IX ena-
bles airline employees to gain access to the airline’s system — and data — from anywhere in the world, and as such, are able to provide customers with updated flight data and reservations.

Aside from that, IX also provides shared services and outsourcing functions, which includes managing Client X’s routers and firewalls from its 24x7x365 network operation centre in Cyberjaya.

Helmi said: “We can monitor up-time and down-time of networks across the globe. If there’s a problem with the network, we can rectify it immediately.”

This comes in handy for users like you and me who rely on continuous and strong Internet connections to get our work done.

IX enjoyed a double-digit growth in revenue and profits over the last three years, giving its efforts a very positive outlook. However, Helmi and his team don’t intend to rest on their laurels. He told us: “We want to be a prominent global service provider in the world with no physical infrastructure.”

One of the ways Helmi aims to achieve this is by upskilling his team members. Helmi said: “For instance, our management team consists entirely of engineers and we are not from a business background. Thankfully the Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC) came in to help develop our skills and provide exposure in client and investor management through their GAIN programme.”

“This helped boost our confidence and skill set in management and leadership.”

In line with a vision to develop Malaysia’s digital economy, the Global Acceleration and Innovation Network (GAIN) programme was inceptioned to catalyse the expansion of local technology SMEs that have the potential to become global players through market access, leadership and capability development, technology disruption and scale-up capital.

For more information about this, visit https://www.mdec.my/mic-malaysia/gain

**RADICA SOFTWARE**

The smartphone you held onto in 2020 is not the same smartphone you held onto 10 years ago. Today, it is made up of a host of technologies that include: processors, chips, cameras, and software. How much time do you spend working with these technologies?

As a software engineer, your role is to develop, test, and maintain software. Your work may involve writing code, designing algorithms, or developing new features for existing products.

As a software engineer, your work is crucial in the advancement of technology. If there was a tool that could ease the job and reduce the stress on engineers, wouldn’t that be great?

I’m referring to Radica Software.

Based in Ipoh, this homegrown company led by Thomas Yip, creates computer-aided design (CAD) software that enables electrical engineers to design electric circuits easily, and ultimately, enhance their productivity.

In an interview Yip did previously about Radica’s first software, he said engineers observed productivity gains of at least 300% to 500%. Since new advanced software solutions are able to automate conventional tasks that are too tedious to do manually, engi-

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ners can now focus more on creating better designs and ensuring safety. In fact, electric circuits that would have previously taken seven days to create, can now be done within two hours.

When I spoke to Yip over Skype recently, he said: “There are so many free softwares out there. Encouraging users to pay a big sum just so they can use your software is a very difficult thing to do. Unless the software can contribute to one’s well-being, people will not pay for it.”

Yip revealed that the software his company offers is extremely easy to use, without any training required, unlike other engineering systems.

Today, Radica has distributed over 2,000 licenses worldwide, with most of their customers from the United States and Canada. Some of the more notable clients include NASA and Apple.

Another reason the company has accumulated a large and venerable cli-
ent base is its swift and efficient way of resolving customer issues.

Here’s the most intriguing fact: Radica has only 10 employees. I asked Yip how this was possible and his response was: “We do not have an accounts person. We have only 10 employees. I asked Yip how this was possible and his response was: “We do not have an accounts person.”

“Without MDEC’s help, we wouldn’t have progressed this far,” Yip also noted that Radica has made heavy investments into its product development and team expansion, both of which are necessary for the company’s growth. This can be observed in their 30% revenue growth this year.

**CONCLUSION**

IX and Radica are companies that play a big part in the functions of many businesses or brands we have become familiar with, yet they are not known due to their operational nature.

I feel somewhat blessed to be given the opportunity to shed some light on these unsung Malaysian companies and hope their stories have inspired you.
WHEN THE LITTLE THINGS COUNT

By EE LING WONG
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I noticed an ambiguous trend when I was studying in Australia. Whenever there was a group discussion, the Australians would maintain full eye contact with each other while the Asians seemed lost. I used to think that I was being left out on purpose and that inclusivity was being sidelined but as I stepped into the working world, I saw a similar trend. But this time around, I noticed, it’s the quiet ones that are on the losing end.

I’ve always heard people say that we need to grab hold of opportunities we get and speak up boldly, but that individuals who are outspoken are well-liked and can be easily approached by many. This got me thinking about people who are not bold or outspoken but are faithfully serving behind the scenes. They do a superb job though they are rarely in the limelight. I began wondering what leadership means to people who work behind the scenes.

I suppose one’s attitude towards a job is very important, be it a big task that everyone takes notice of or a menial task that is easily overlooked, but my recent travel gave me a lot of insights into how ordinary people can appear to be extraordinary.

I was on a trip to Japan and I have to say that it was quite an eye-opening experience. Here, I found countless people who were happily engaged in “thankless” tasks but they were content with what they were doing and would approach it with so much enthusiasm and genuineness. First, let’s talk about their front liners. Walking down the shopping streets, I saw sales promoters smiling and proudly holding cardboard signs to welcome customers to their store. Right next to the door, I also saw rubbish collectors energetically running from one house to another as they executed their duties. For a lot of us, this may come across as a mundane job but it amazed me that these people were doing it at such speed and fervour.

Next, I came across a road construction site and watched silently as the workers barricaded the site in an orderly manner. Not only did they set up barricades across the parameters, they had also designated workers to stand around as an added safety measure and none of these workers looked tired, withdrawn or overworked. They were there – all smiles – just ready to do their job.

During my stay there, I often heard blaring sirens. Motorists quickly made way for special purpose vehicles – as do we – but what caught my attention was the fact that even ambulances slowed down at the pedestrian crossing. As the pedestrians stopped to give way to the ambulance, you’d hear the words “air-gato gozaimasu” over the hailers. Even a rushing ambulance driver was exception- ally courteous in thanking the pedestrian for giving way. That’s an example of how ordinary people can shape a lasting legacy.

We have the power to make a difference in every way. According to Jim Collins, that is the essence of true leadership. How then can your good managers become great leaders who create sustainable impact? Our exciting “Commander” simulation challenges leaders to develop the potent combination of business success and character that can shape a lasting legacy.
**DO YOU KNOW A FRED?**

**STORIES OF GOOD PEOPLE DOING GOOD DEEDS**

**Margaret Kudalum, 43**

Margaret Kudalum is a communications expert. She is married to a retired Police officer and has two children. She and her family moved to Puchong; PPR Kampung Muhibbah, Bukit Jelutong, in 1999. Margaret was appointed to her present job after the service 14 years ago. She says she loves it. Margaret's commitment to her job is apparent. Margaret is a very capable and efficient person. She has a strong work ethic and a positive attitude. She is always willing to go the extra mile to ensure that her job is done properly. She is a valuable asset to the company and is highly regarded by her colleagues. She has received several awards and recognition for her hard work and dedication. Margaret is a respected member of the community and is well-known for her kindness and generosity. She is a great example of a hardworking and dedicated employee.

**Saraviah Kamaruddin, 29**

Saraviah Kamaruddin is a Finance and HR executive. He is married and has two children. He is a hardworking and dedicated employee. He is always willing to go the extra mile to ensure that his job is done properly. He is a valuable asset to the company and is highly regarded by his colleagues. He has received several awards and recognition for his hard work and dedication. He is a respected member of the community and is well-known for his kindness and generosity. He is a great example of a hardworking and dedicated employee.

**Hazren Hosman, 46**

Hazren Hosman is a policeman. He is married and has two children. He is a hardworking and dedicated employee. He is always willing to go the extra mile to ensure that his job is done properly. He is a valuable asset to the company and is highly regarded by his colleagues. He has received several awards and recognition for his hard work and dedication. He is a respected member of the community and is well-known for his kindness and generosity. He is a great example of a hardworking and dedicated employee.

**Ying Chin, 26**

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**Sabrina Jaidine, 20**

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**Vivek Vign, 30**

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**Prethiba Esvary, 36**

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**MEET T.Vijayarani. Fondly known as Auntie Shanti, the 50-year-old administrator of the company.**

She has been working for Leaderonomics for four years. She has been working as a clerk near her home in Sungai Besi. She was asked by co-founder Ang Hui Ming, who was looking for someone to help out with the office work. Auntie Shanti was happy to accept the job and started working for Leaderonomics. She has been working as a clerk ever since. She enjoys her work and is always willing to go the extra mile to ensure that her job is done properly. She is a valuable asset to the company and is highly regarded by her colleagues. She has received several awards and recognition for her hard work and dedication. She is a respected member of the community and is well-known for her kindness and generosity. She is a great example of a hardworking and dedicated employee.

**Traveller and journalist Prethiba Esvary, who has been covering the tourism sector in the country from the ground up, has interviewed numerous tourism experts and operators in the industry.**

In her new book, “Hijab and Hijabness: Fashion, Identity and Modernity,” Esvary explores the complex relationship between wearing the hijab and the construction of identity in contemporary Muslim societies. She argues that the hijab is not just a symbol of religious affiliation, but a form of self-expression and personal identity. Esvary’s work is grounded in her extensive research and interviews with Muslim women from diverse backgrounds, and her analysis is informed by a deep understanding of the cultural and historical contexts in which the hijab is worn. The book is a must-read for anyone interested in the intersection of fashion, identity, and modernity in Muslim societies. **Get your copy now!**

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**PAIN IS A GREAT TEACHER**

**OVERCOMING CHALLENGES CAN HELP US REALISE OUR POTENTIAL**

The physical strain involved in completing a marathon is challenging. But that didn't stop Daniel from completing a 100km ultramarathon.

One month passed and the training felt easier. I was able to train every alternate day and feel like I could train again. Two months passed and I started doing more complicated routines and increased the weights I could carry. I felt like I got stronger and it was a very satisfying feeling. After a while I realised that my progress was not as rapid as before and that I was hitting a mental block in my training.

How we decide on our responses will eventually differentiate those of us who overcome our challenges and thrive despite our circumstances, from those who crack under the pressure of our challenges.

With the guidance of my coach, we switched our training routine and increased the demands of workouts. Then, it felt as if I started all over again! I would feel so sore I could not do anything for the next three days!

That’s where I learnt about constantly pushing my limits and not allowing myself to hit a plateau in my training. Our bodies usually go through plateaus as a sign of our remarkable ability to adjust to stress and change. So a fitness routine that may seem hard to us a few months ago, would feel easier because our bodies have adapted enough to be able to take on the constant stress.

So in order to constantly grow, we need to be comfortable with being uncomfortable. We should be able to use pain, challenges and discomfort as tools that push us past our plateaus in life so that we can reach new levels — whether it is in business, relationships or health.

Have you ever noticed that because you have gone through challenges that seem so hard for you at that point of time, similar challenges in the future don’t intimidate you as much, or that they somehow feel more manageable? Pain isn’t always something that we can avoid so long as we are exposed to unexpected circumstances in life. However, if we are able to perceive and respond to it differently, it makes us not only stronger, but more adaptable to whatever life has to offer. That way we can be the best that we can be and fulfil the potential we have in us.

**T**hat was something a teacher once told me before I delivered a talk to a group of school students. I respectfully disagreed with the teacher. I thought pain is still pain, even if they come in different forms. Who can say that the pain of being bullied by your classmates in school is any less than the pain of not being able to walk?

I believe understanding of pain and how we deal with it needs to be explored, beyond just comparing it with another person’s definition or experience.

We need to know that pain is relative and that the severity of the pain is dependent on how we perceive and respond to it.

That being said, we can always draw inspiration from the way others respond to the pain they go through in life and discover how some individuals thrive in the face of adversity while others don’t.

PAIN DEMANDS A RESPONSE

Pain is a self-preservation mechanism designed to keep us from harm. Of all the sensations we experience, nothing warrants a need to act faster than that of the feeling of pain.

Accidentally touching the side of a boiling hot kettle would send signals to our brain to pull our hand away before we can even consciously think about it. The throbbing pain from a sprained ankle tells us to ease off on the leg until it recovers and regains strength.

Pain comes in different forms. The most common pain we associate with is usually physical pain. However, emotional and psychological pain can play bigger roles in the way we perceive our world every day.

An embarrassing experience in your first public speech would probably give you nightmares of public speaking in the future and make you think twice before attempting it again.

Whatever the form, one thing is for sure — pain is a reality of life. Of course, there is no right response to pain that is universal to everyone.

How we decide on our response however, will eventually differentiate those of us who overcome our challenges and thrive despite our circumstances from those who crack under the pressure of our challenges.

When I was younger, I was often bullied in school because of my disability. It was in primary five that a group of students banded together and made fun of me in front of the whole class. They laughed at me and called me “crippled boy”.

For a boy at that age, to hear his peers laughing at him and degrading him in class was a pain that was beyond imagination. My self-worth and confidence was shattered as I could not fight back or defend myself. The bullying continued even after school during our tuition classes. They even created a comic strip to make fun of me! Wow, how persistent were they?

There were a few ways I could respond to the bullying. One option is to believe in what they said and internalise their words into my heart — that I was crippled and useless. Or I could respond by telling myself that I am of no use and support my parents. I found confidence in my own identity and chose to not believe what the bullies were saying.

Two years later I transferred to a new school. I thought that I would not meet them again but a leadership camp organised by my school brought one of the bullies back into my life.

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Accidentally touching the side of a boiling hot kettle would send signals to our brain to pull our hand away before we can even consciously think about it. The throbbing pain from a sprained ankle tells us to ease off on the leg until it recovers and regains strength.

Pain comes in different forms. The most common pain we associate with is usually physical pain. However, emotional and psychological pain can play bigger roles in the way we perceive our world every day.

The boy somehow decided to be friendly with me. Although I still remember the words he had uttered, I had to decide if I wanted to move on or hold on to my past. I decided to let bygones be bygones and engaged in a conversation with him. I realised that pain demands a response. Whether I choose to avoid the pain or overcome it, it was up to me.

PAIN DOESN’T LAST FOREVER

The first race I participated in — using a wheelchair — was a 10km run in 2012. Since then, I’ve completed 21km half-marathons, 42km full marathons and a 100km ultramarathon.

While the physical strain involved in completing a marathon is challenging enough, one of the things I dread the most in a marathon are hills. Overcoming an uphill climb with a wheelchair, 35km into the run while having cramps, was probably one of the hardest physical challenges I’ve experienced.

All of the hills I’ve pushed myself up from, there was not a single one that kept going up and never went down. I noticed that no matter how steep the uphill may be, it will eventually go down. It reminded me that in life, there is no challenge that lasts forever.

There will be times where we feel that the challenges we’re facing are insurmountable, and that we would never overcome them. Let me assure you that if you persevere long enough, you will eventually overcome any hurdles in life.

**BE COMFORTABLE WITH BEING UNCOMFORTABLE**

Although I’ve been participating in wheelchair marathons for a number of years, I’ve always been training with my body weight and wheelchair. It was only recently that I started training in a gym when I decided to pursue a goal of qualifying for the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics.

The first four weeks of my training at the gym was the toughest for me. I would have one day of training at the gym and be sore for the next five days before I could go again. It took so long for me to recover because my body wasn’t adjusted to the type and intensity of workout I was going through.

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By LES MCKEOWN
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4 REASONS WHY GREAT LEADERS GET OVERLOOKED

NO RECOGNITION DESPITE ALL YOUR BEST EFFORTS? HERE’S WHAT’S GOING ON

The bad news is, you’re not alone. Your first challenge is to distinguish yourself from them.

1. You’re not as good as you think you are.
   Yes, it happens. Maybe you arrived at the organisation with an inflated sense of your own ability. Maybe your helicopter parents convinced you that you can do no wrong. Maybe you’ve never really played in the big leagues until now. Whatever the underlying cause (and there are many), the most common reason I see leaders get frustrated by lack of recognition is that they’re simply not as competent at leadership as their self-image leads them to believe.

2. Your company doesn’t value leadership skills.
   Let’s assume you’re not in the first category and that you actually are a good leader. In that case there are only two possibilities as to why you’re not receiving the recognition you deserve.
   The first possibility is that your organisation simply doesn’t value leadership, full stop. You’ll know if this is the case. You’ll see it in a lack of innovation and creativity; there’ll be a lack of a challenge function at higher levels of leadership, and you’ll probably have noticed that good leaders don’t hang around too long.
   The solution? Get out. There’s nowhere to go in an organisation that doesn’t value leadership, and there’s no point kidding yourself that the culture is going to someday change. It won’t.

3. What you’ve achieved doesn’t align with your organisation’s goals.
   If you are in fact a strong leader, but aren’t receiving the recognition you deserve, the second possibility is that what you’re achieving doesn’t align with the organisation’s core goals. If that’s the case, you need to look at life and work. Take responsibility of your own ability. Maybe your helicop-ter parents convinced you that you can do no wrong. Maybe you’ve never really played in the big leagues until now. Whatever the underlying cause (and there are many), the most common reason I see leaders get frustrated by lack of recognition is that they’re simply not as competent at leadership as their self-image leads them to believe.

4. You’re not actually leading.
   One final thought. Don’t allow yourself the luxury of thinking you’re not getting the recognition you need because your boss is stealing all your glory. Leaders don’t get overshadowed, only managers do.

By DARYLL TAN
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FINDING FULFILMENT AND PURPOSE IN LIFE

1. WORK-LIFE BALANCE
   Work-life balance is a misconception. People who find fulfilment in their work that ultimately translates to a wholesome life are able to manage their lives holistically, with work being integrated into their lives; a seamless habit that enables them to achieve a fulfilling result. Work is part of life, compartmentalising life and work will only cause confusion and unproductivity.

2. BE CONTENTED YET AMBITIOUS
   You have heard this before, hear it again – be grateful! Be grateful that you have a less-than-perfect life, a paying job, an abled body. Envy will keep you far from contentment, get rid of it. To find life and work’s fullest fulfillment, know that being contented will save you a lot of wishful thinking and keep your head clear for what is ahead. Be contented but never miss out on being ambitious as that gives you an extra dose of motivation to fulfill your purpose in life. Be contented with your current state; be ambitious for a better future.

3. CREATE YOUR OWN HAVEN
   Too often, people complain about their struggles or misfortunes in life and at work. Stop complaining and change that energy into creating what you love. Take responsibility of your own life and find that sugar and spice that will bring you fulfillment. If your work is less than ideal, create your own playing field. If your life is a mess, step up and get organised. You will not find fulfillment and pur-

4. SURROUND YOURSELF WITH LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE
   Your community plays a huge role in shaping your life. Since young, your days were spent building relationships, some made an impact, and some were treated as acquaintance. We usually build a tight network of influencers. No matter the journey, we are made to socialise and the older we get, we need to choose wisely our circle of influencers. These influencers will determine how you look at life and treat work. So, if you want to soar like an eagle, don’t mix around with turkeys.

5. CHAMPION A CAUSE BIGGER THAN YOURSELF
   Again, life is graciously bigger than our finite minds can ever conceive. So don’t spend too much time trying to figure out life, rather, be selfless and lend a helping hand to others who need it more than you. As far as me, I personally want to make an impact towards the people around me by simply sharing my experiences from being a mentor to entrepreneurs.

At work, I am building a business not just to serve market solutions, but to establish and provide a purposeful job opportunity for the generations. Sometimes finding your purpose and fulfillment in life and work takes reverse engineering. Go ahead, champion a cause and allow it to mould you. The above recommendations are not exhaustive to finding fulfillment and purpose in life and work. Take intentional time to recognise your purpose in life and work. Drive that purpose forward to find continuous fulfillment. Be responsible and selfless.

Les McKeown is the CEO of Predictable Success, a leading adviser on accelerated business growth. He has started more than 40 companies and guided hundreds more worldwide. McKeown has identified the four leadership styles needed for business success. To get in touch with him, e-mail us at editor@leaderonomics.com
DO YOUR EMPLOYEES LEARN OR LEAVE?

CREATE A WORK CULTURE THAT NURTURES; NOT PAMPERS YOUR PEOPLE

DO YOUR PEOPLE RECOGNISE THEIR STRENGTHS?

Let us help your employees understand what it takes to grow their leadership skills and bring positive impact to your business.

Our coaching experts are ready to journey with your organisation to discover and unlock hidden potential in your workforce.

By ASHVANI RAMANATHAN

ET’S be honest now, shall we? How many interviews have you conducted where your prospect wanted to hear about growth opportunities? On the other side of the coin, how many times have you heard of complaints from colleagues and acquaintances on the lack of support systems within their workplace that is invested in their professional growth? Here’s a perplexing scenario that is causing distress to many present-day businesses:

Without the right people development strategies, employees suffer from a severe case of indifference. Work becomes routine and too comfortably cushy, leading them towards a workplace culture that pampers rather than nurtures their growth. Have you ever driven on that familiar route to work mindlessly, only to arrive at your office with no memory whatsoever of how you safely got there? Boredom, routine work and professional stagnation are amongst some of the weeds that suppress an organisation’s chance of retaining their talent.

The burden lies heavily on the shoulders of leaders. Many are still rooted in their limiting belief that by developing their employees, they are only setting the stage for these employees to leave for greener pastures. It is hard to disregard the question of “why should we invest so much in their learning and career advancement, only to watch them develop and disappear?”

While it may be a fair enough statement accumulated through empirical failure in staff retention, helping employees grow is very much the lesser of the two evils.

WHY IS THIS A PROBLEM?

Think about it – how will it affect your organisation’s reputation and results, when you have a group of employees who are not eager to learn and excited to grow? Will employees offer their best when the organisation has not rewarded nor reciprocated these efforts by providing the right learning and development platforms for their people?

Without knowing that their employees are committed in helping them reach their full potential and without experiencing a workplace that is keen on their growth, any staff retention strategy only begs the question of “What is in it for me?”

Good employees leave when they no longer see themselves growing along with the organisation. As a result, the rehashing and retaining process can be a financially straining and time consuming cycle.

With over 87% of millennials agreeing that development is important in a job, evidence is fast accumulating to support employees’ perception of internal growth opportunities as one of the more important predictors of employee engagement and long-term commitment within the organisation.

While we are not disputing the importance of other hygiene factors such as a good pay check and medical benefits, the workforce has clearly transformed over the years to recognise the impact that growth and development has on their career advancement and future stability. It is timely that organisations keep up with this change.

The equations are pretty simple on this one, yet many employers today fail to internalise the simple power of developing their people – and subsequently engaging them within an effective workplace culture that provides the autonomy and independence to stretch further without fearing failure.

This dual-impact retention strategy goes a long way in increasing trust, commitment and overall employee engagement. Take Pixar for example. Through its Pixar School, the organisation advocates leadership that inspires lifelong learning and continuous growth within its people. The opportunity for learning and growth is a huge stimulus and a difference maker in the loyalty pledged by employees to their workplaces.

So, when was the last time your leadership team thought about the way the organisation developed its people? When the world is rapidly progressing around you, why would your retention strategies and growth opportunities remain status quo?

Here are three impactful methods to rethink your organisation’s learning and growth initiatives:

1. Treat your employees as individuals first

When you have a pool of talented individuals, it is such a wasted opportunity when you do not spend time to understand their unique wiring, aspirations and personal motivation for growth. Get to know them beyond the requirements of work and discuss individual interests and goals.

Help them design an individual development roadmap that sharpens the focus on their professional future. Be invested in their growth and help them overcome their uncertainties. As a leader, there is a significant return-on-investment for your personal time, energy and effort committed to drive your people’s learning and growth.

2. Energete your employees beyond their usual job functions

Organisations that seek to remain relevant must distinguish themselves by recognising the unique talents and contributions of each of their employees. Every talent, when thoughtfully combined and collaborated to achieve a certain goal, can be the organisation’s competitive advantage if properly communicated to the market.

Create opportunities for employees to take on new responsibilities outside their regular job function, within areas of their interests. Challenge them, put them in uncertain situations, teach them to work more effectively with others through cross-collaborations and support them to be agile and think on their feet. Encourage your employees to pursue their aspirations and watch the energy and excitement grow in your workplace.

3. Empower your employees by removing structural barriers

Rigid organisational structures create barriers for the organisation’s adaptability to changes in the market, and may soon be a thing of the past. Formal hierarchies and processes often compartmentalise employees into their functional roles, when they could have been more fluid and still true learning and growth. While it may be challenging to completely remove all structures and processes – especially when they still provide some benefits – it can help today’s generation of employees work more fluidly by breaking down walls,bridging silos and creating agility in the way they work.

RETHINKING THE WAY WE SUPPORT LEARNING AND GROWTH

Modern learning and a smarter workforce development means rethinking the way we think, talk and decide about employee growth and development. It is not just about the way we train people; rather, it is how they are being trained to be ready for the future. By initiating a few practical steps of change, we can slowly but surely enable our organisations to rethink conventional development into forward-thinking growth strategies.

The end result will be engaged employees, a productive workforce, and in return a better business.
“The strongest people are not those who show strength in front of the world but those who fight and win battles that others do not know anything about.” —John Hambisch

Online Exclusive

We’ve heard about farmers, cleaners and a number of people who take on thankless, risky jobs. What have we done to appreciate them? One woman decided that she will teach her engineering students about design thinking and sustainable development so that they could help transform the lives of others. Read all about it in this week’s exclusive article “Engineering Change Through Education” by Prethiba Esvary.

Roshan is back! Reporter Tamara Jayne directed a question posed by one of our readers recently on Leaderonomics.com – on where great ideas come from. One way is to ask a lot of questions to discover new thoughts and ideas. Watch what else Leaderonomics CEO, Roshan Thiran has to say. Scan the QR Code or visit goo.gl/nTFZot

Recognising the unheralded superheroes

They are the ones without whom our personal and professional lives would not run like clockwork. Steady and ever-reliable, these are the people behind the scenes who set the stage for convenience, security and, as a result, winning performances.

In every team, we are bound to find unheralded superheroes; the resident go-to person, the cornerstone, the one who powers the innovation behind the big idea. Quite often, their roles are—while monumental and crucial—mostly out of the limelight.

This week’s issue has been a tribute to the people who help make things happen; discreet, enduring and consistent, there’s much to learn from, and about, our everyday heroes:

1. The back story of success

Nobody gets to the top alone, even if the publicly known face of success in an organisation is only one person. They’re often surrounded by dedicated and committed individuals who understand the ambitions of a company or individual, and make a conscious decision to play their part in achieving success. As Jeslyn La, Leaderonomics’ very own graphic designer wrote on Page 3:

“I’ve always been surrounded by such people who make a difference but don’t realise that they do. I’ve seen them greet security guards, toilet cleaners, cashiers and waiters by name. These people make it a point to get to know others who serve them.”

2. The collective power of ‘small things’

If unsung heroes play such a crucial part in making a difference, imagine a world where everybody pays attention to making the little things better. There’s no ‘one person’ who needs to step into the role of making a difference. Greatness comes in collaboration. This is what Leaderonomics Youth’s Ee Ling Wong, in her piece on Page 5, illustrates. Narrating a simple, but powerful experience in Japan, she wrote:

“... one day, I was walking past a small park and stopped to take photos of some beautiful tulip blooms. A passer-by gently approached me and reminded me to not step on the soil although I was one foot away from the plant. We are probably so used to the ‘mind your own business’ mentality but even the ordinary man on street there cared so much about their environment.”

3. What happens without them

When things take on a routine nature, it’s easy to forget just how much it takes to enable our routine to take place. The collective power of ‘small things’ set the stage for convenience, security and, as a result, professional lives would not run like clockwork. Steady and enduring our heroes are the ones without whom our personal and professional lives would not run like clockwork...

Lydia Gomez
Editor
Empower your teen to make a difference these summer holidays!

Finding something meaningful for your child these summer holidays? Why not sign them up for our 6-day Leadership Camp where they will be challenged out of their comfort zone and inspired to make a difference?

The DIODE Camp is a great way for young people to discover more about themselves, improve their social competencies, learn new skills and take their leadership learning to the next level. Campers will learn through fun and engaging activities, group challenges, hands-on projects, simulations and much more!

Limited spaces available, sign up today!

For more info and to register, email diode@leaderonomics.com or whatsapp 0176362047.