BECOMING A LEADER WITH INFLUENCE

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9 PRINCIPLES FOR STAYING AHEAD OF THE CURVE
What is an organisation? How does an organisation behave? What are the values of an organisation? If you asked bestselling author Stephen Lundin (p10) these questions, he would likely shoot back with: “An organisation is a myth — what we’re really talking about here is a group of people.”

It’s an important distinction to make. Leaderonomics, for example, has no values, but its people do. The company doesn’t have a vision; its people have a vision. Leaderonomics doesn’t perform well or otherwise — its people are the ones who perform.

There are always opportunities in the workplace to bring lightness and joy into the environment, to create the kinds of connections that keep people coming back for more and inspire employees to keep giving more. The Fish! Philosophy, says Lundin, looks at a number of aspects of our lives and work to shake us out of our habitual comfort zones and explore their innovative possibilities. This, he says, enables organisations to create new things, find new ideas, and make necessary changes. The more innovative people there are, the easier that process becomes.

Lundin talks about “provocations” that motivate people to become innovative. He uses the analogy of a bridge collapsing, which forces people to take different routes to work, due to which they will notice new things and think in different ways.

Try it for yourself. Think about the sentence: The organisation needs to improve. At best, it’s a vague statement that presents little direction; at worst, it sounds like an impossible undertaking, but one that conveniently exists outside ourselves.

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For Students: Master your subject — and master it in a way that’s thoughtful. To connect with Sandy, follow @leaderonomics on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram.

For HR professionals: Find ways to be innovative in how you influence others. HR professionals have so much that’s asked of them, but they often lack a central point of authority that has the power to bring about real change. Change comes through having an influence — make influence the key focus of your innovative efforts.

For CEOs: Let your people be free in how they approach problems and look to solve them. If you want to have an innovative company, you have to develop innovative people.

THE FISH! PHILOSOPHY

Steve Lundin’s Fish! Philosophy centres on four core principles: Play, Make their day, Be there; and Choose your attitude.

The Fish! Philosophy is known throughout the world as the place where fun-loving fishmongers entertain their customers and provide extraordinary service and value for money.

There are always opportunities in the workplace to bring lightness and joy into the environment, to create the kinds of connections that keep people coming back for more and inspire employees to keep giving more. The Fish! Philosophy looks at a number of aspects of our behaviour, and how advanced team members interact by “not just being physically present, but by being wholeheartedly present”, and how they understand and discuss the notion that “each member has the power to choose his or her attitude, and become responsible for that choice.”

Cats — the Nine Lives of Innovation

We’ve all heard the saying: “Curiosity kills the cat,” but how often do we stop to consider its implications? Steven Lundin believes the saying was actually born out of fear, and that we tend to see the safe options (e.g. “This is the way we’ve always done it…” ) as being the key to our survival, when, in fact, it is innovation that leads to the kind of possible change that enables us to thrive and survive.

This age-old saying is a useful way to hold us back, to avoid embracing uncomfortable perspectives and actions that bring about new thinking, ideas and practices. Perhaps it’s time to ask the question: “What if curiosity is the key to creativity?”
By PAUL TEN HAKEN
editor@leaderonomics.com

JUST weeks ago, I stepped down from my position as the chief executive officer at Click Rain Inc, the company I founded nearly 10 years ago – I still remember day one in our tiny 200 sq ft office.

It was just me, a desk given to me by a pal, a brick of Dell laptop, and a Treo cell phone (remember those?). I turned on the computer that first day and as it started up, I thought, “Man, Lord... I hope this works out.”

Well, it did. Fast forward to today, we have been blessed with an amazing team of 35 people (and growing), revenues worth of US$5mil, too many awards to list, and some of the best clients we could ever have imagined. It’s been an amazing ride and we have been blessed beyond belief as a company.

I still plan to stay involved with the company as a partner, the chair of our advisory board and assist with some other strategic initiatives, but for all intents and purposes, my time as an “employee” at Click Rain is winding up. It feels weird to write it, it feels weird to read it as well.

I know I am going to get a lot of questions on this move. Where did this come from? Did you have a falling out with your partners? Were you fired? What are you going to do next? Is the company on shaky ground? There has to be more to the story right?

There’s not much of a dramatic story to tell. In fact, it’s really quite simple: God told me it was time to move on.

This transition has been about three years in the making, and I want to share with you some of the reasons I felt it was time for me to move on to new things.

1 MY JOB IS NOT MY IDENTIT

Being a CEO is hard, and being a founder and CEO is even harder. It’s fun, exciting, stressful, lonely, depressing, and exhilarating – many of those emotions are experienced daily.

You have “raised your company from birth” and are “super” protective of the company, the brand – everything.

In many ways, the identity of the CEO or founder becomes synonymous with the company, and vice versa. There is a bit of bravado that comes with being the CEO as well. You become an instant authority (whether warranted or not) and it can be a position that can quickly inflate an ego.

When people ask, “What do you do?” my first response is always, “I am the CEO at Click Rain.” I often wonder why I don’t answer this question with “I am a dad, a Christian, a developer of people, a devoted husband, etc.” For me, I have gotten very wrapped up in my professional identity – this – in itself – is not bad, but I am excited to see what the non_Click Rain Paul looks like.

2 TOO MANY FOUNDERS OVERSTAY THEIR WELCOME

It’s important for many founders or CEOs to experience some brutal self-assessment on a regular basis. Does feedback, professional mentors, or mastermind groups keep you accountable to the question: “Do I still work for the right person to lead this company?”

Too often, we in business assume the original founder of a company is the best person to lead the business as it grows, which is true in many cases. But sometimes, the person who took the company from A to B may not be the best person to take the company from B to C.

This takes self-awareness and quite honestly, an ego check to reach that realisation.

3 MY CALLING AND MY VOCATION ARE TWO DIFFERENT THINGS

I am called to encourage people to be bold in their faith in the workplace. That has been made particularly clear to me over the past several years. I do that through my vocation as the CEO at Click Rain. I can also live out that calling as a Walmart greeter, a landscaper, a marketing executive, a waiter, and so on. My current vocation is shifting, but my calling remains clear. You must never confuse the two.

4 THE FLAME WAS DIMMING

I have always told my team that when Sunday nights become depressing because they are followed by Monday morning, it’s time to rethink your job and your fit. I need to follow my own advice on this one. My passion for our work – which remains some of the best in this region – has been surpassed by the passion of our team.

That is awesome to see. However, when your leader is no longer the most passionate person on the team and inspiring each and every person to go out and crush it daily, the leader needs to look at passing that torch.

5 OUR NEXT GENERATION OF LEADERSHIP IS HUNGRY

We’ve done a lot of things wrong at Click Rain over the years, but one thing we’ve done well is hire amazing people who have brought into our culture and vision. This transition has been on my heart for several years, and I’ve worked faithfully to build an executive team that I knew would be able to take the reins when it would happen.

The executive team at Click Rain is some of the most talented people I’ve ever worked with, and they are hungry to blow the lid off this place. I have no doubt that it is going to happen and we’ve got a strategic plan we’re executing and that is going to launch the company to new places. It’s time for me to step aside and watch these unbelievable men and women take the company and that plan to a place we never thought we could go.

WHAT’S NEXT?

I am excited to chase some of the entrepreneurial ventures I’ve only partially dedicate time to over the years. This includes the Dispatch Project, a 501(c)3 organisation I co-founded several years back. I also have investments in other businesses that I am anxious to put more time to. Same calling, new vocations.

After some explosive internal and external candid candidate vetting, our next CEO is going to come from within the walls of Click Rain. Natalie Eisenberg has been our VP of Sales and Marketing for the past 18 months and will be taking the helm in September.

Before I started Click Rain in 2008, Natalie and I had worked together for many years in a client agency relationship. From the day, I hung the Click Rain shingle, Natalie was on my shortlist of executives I wanted to be part of this company.

I was always impressed with her professional demeanour, her sharp marketing mind, and her ability to get people to “buy what she was selling.” This timing was never quite right, but in 2016, she finally joined us and I am beyond excited to be walking alongside her as she transitions into her new role. She will be fantastic.

Too often, we in business assume the original founder of a company is the best person to lead the business as it grows, which is true in many cases. But sometimes, the person who took the company from A to B may not be the best person to take the company from B to C.

When it’s time, you just know, you know? Having an inner peace about moving on has been such a blessing. In addition, the months of closed-door planning we’ve done to prepare for this transition gives me an increased level of peace that the company is in fantastic hands.

The company will be moving on to great things, the culture that we’ve meticulously and intentionally crafted is blossoming and our clients are going to continue to experience some of the best marketing technology strategy in the country.

It’s an exciting time at Click Rain, and I’ve been blessed to play a small part.
BE AN INSPIRING BOSS

By PAUL COOPER
editor@leaderonomics.com

OW do you know if you are a good boss or a bad boss? If you are the latter, your team is not going to tell you; they will just be talking about it behind your back. That negatively affects productivity, team morale and ultimately, business performance.

Being a great boss and getting your employees excited about working for you often comes back to how much you inspire them to perform well and be their best. Aiming to be an inspiring boss will bring out the best in your team, making you look your best along the way.

Here are nine ways to help you become an inspiring boss:

1. BE GENUINE

It is tempting to think that once you are in a position of power, you have to project a faultless image that is not necessarily legitimate. By staying true to who you are and letting your team see glimpses of that – be it your penchant for bad rap music, or your love of cat memorabilia – you allow yourself to be human, and therefore more relatable. You don’t need to break into song, just be your authentic self: it’s the only way to make real, personal connections.

2. LISTEN AND LEARN

Make sure you take the time to connect with your team. Make the effort to ask each individual how they are doing on a regular basis and really listen to the answers, as they will speak volumes about the team as well as the individual. People like to think that the person they are working for cares. It makes them feel valued and spurs them on to do better work.

Remove yourself from technology to talk to your staff and encourage them to talk to you – hiding behind e-mails giving directions doesn’t build relationships. Your team has valuable insights to offer. Make time to listen to them.

3. CONTINUOUS FEEDBACK

This is one of the most important factors – without continual feedback you will experience a communication breakdown. Let your team members know how they are doing in an honest and constructive way. If the people you manage see that you are noticing the work that they are producing, they will naturally take greater care over their projects and deliveries.

People are generally willing to accept feedback and act on constructive feedback, so keep it coming on a regular basis, don’t wait for yearly appraisals to keep your team continually improving. Also ask for feedback on what else you can do to support them.

This will not only endear you to your team, who will see practical evidence of being invested in their success, but also to senior management who will notice the increase in productivity and engagement from your team.

4. ADMIT YOUR FAILINGS

Recognise where, as a boss, you have weaknesses. Search out ways to improve those. Often it is tempting to push our limitations to the side, or not even admit them to ourselves for fear of being judged negatively.

Find a mentor or two – senior people in your personal development around weak spots. If you have any particular issues with individuals you manage, discuss those situations with your trusted advisors. Be self-aware and acknowledge where you need to work on yourself.

5. CARE AND CARE ALIKE

Make sure you keep your treatment of your team members on an even keel. Everyone naturally has people that they gravitate towards, and as a manager you won’t be any different. But be careful of favouritism as it can breed resentment among those who perceive they are not part of your inner circle. As a leader, it is important you make sure everyone has opportunities to shine. Being inclusive strengthens team bonds and optimises team performance.

6. TAKE THE TIME TO SOCIALISE

This doesn’t mean you have to be out partying with your team every night (and if you do go out partying, that’s when it’s important to remember you’re the boss), but make some time each week, at a minimum, to connect with people on a personal level.

This can be asking them about their upcoming trip, suggesting a coffee – even where you can give and receive feedback or just spending five minutes chatting about their plans for the weekend.

Having a social connection which goes deeper than just passing chit-chat builds relationships that foster positive behaviours.

7. BE POSITIVE

On that note, positive behaviours are highly contagious, as are negative ones. Prowling around the office with a face like thunder isn’t conducive to a happy working environment for your team.

Making sure your attitude stays optimistic and upbeat, will reflect well on you and keep the people you manage happy. Similarly, it is your responsibility to stamp out any negativity you see in your team. If you see discontent, go straight to the source and address it. Enthusiasm is contagious, so reflect what you want to see in your people.

8. TAKE ONE FOR YOUR TEAM

Don’t throw your employees under the bus. If you lead a team, then you are ultimately responsible for their successes and their mistakes. Great bosses don’t pass the buck back down to their team members; they step in and take accountability.

Of course individuals need to be answerable for their actions, but if you lead by example and help solve problems rather than pass blame, you will find your whole team becoming more accountable and more confident taking calculated risks – which is where the greatest victories lie.

Never make the mistake of thinking that blaming your team will get you off the hook with your superiors when something goes wrong – it’s more likely that they will question your managerial skills for allowing this to happen.

9. BE FLEXIBLE

These days hardly any employees work a standard 37.5 hour week. Contactable via e-mail and phone 24/7, some workers never switch off, which can cause resentment and burnout.

That being said, most employees recognise that this is just part and parcel of the current working landscape. So how do you make sure you keep your team happy? Recognise their extra effort and offer a trade-off.

A longer lunchtime to go to the gym, a lie in after a late night at the office, time out to attend an appointment or a school play all go a long way to generating good feelings and actually increasing productivity in the workforce.

Now go forth and inspire!

CAN YOUR MANAGERS SEE THE WHOLE PICTURE?

What if your managers made decisions with your whole business in mind? Train your new managers to see the full picture and to understand how their decisions affect the whole organisation. Our Build Your Business simulation will stretch their strategic thinking and execution skills in a competitive yet safe environment.

www.leaderonomics.com | Saturday 5 August 2017
By R VENKATESWARAN
editor@leaderonomics.com

WHEN organisations look at sustainability, the most frequently highlighted facts are the numbers that help to hold up the organisation. The nature of business or the size of the organisation hardly matters; it is the key statistics that count – revenue, profit, customer demographics, market share and many more measures that attract key stakeholders of the organisation.

The importance of these powerful numbers can’t be denied. What is lost, however, are the faces behind these numbers. In the long-term war for continued profitable existence, the ability of the people to drive the business forward and hold it together for the future, rarely makes headline news. In the fast-paced, highly intensive, technology-driven world of business, leadership issues need to garner more attention at all levels of the organisation, more so if there is a future to be considered as part of the long-term organisational strategy.

SUCCESSION CHALLENGES

The whole world looks at leaders and leadership qualities when observing people who shape and decide the future.

Vince Lombardi is convinced that leaders can be created, not born. Indeed that is what most organisations are on the lookout for – precious talent that can help them take the business to the next level. How successful they are in identifying and nurturing the next generation of potential leaders will eventually determine the sustainability of the organisation for the future.

In general, the main challenges faced by organisations primarily seem to accrue from any or all of the following factors:

1 Lack of management vision and foresight

Succession planning needs to permeate all levels of the organisation, not just the top layer. It should be embedded into the long-term strategic future plan of the organisation.

If this is not factored into the organisational strategy, it could have serious repercussions for the organisation in the long-run.

Large organisations have always had good succession plans and had clearly identified successors who were groomed into their roles. Microsoft, IBM, Infosys, the Tata group and a host of companies had well-managed succession plans that ensured smooth transition after the baton is passed to the next in line.

This also ensured sustainability for the organisation as a going concern over an extended period of time.

2 Insufficient talent pipeline to fill key positions

In an increasingly competitive world where organisations are fighting to acquire or retain the best talent available, there are not enough people with the right skill sets or competencies.

This is an issue faced by a majority of the organisations in the 21st century as they look to fill shoes with suitable leaders who can take an organisation to the next level.

3 Identified potential successors do not last the distance

High potential employees who have been identified as suitable successors by the management leave the organisation before they reach their fullest potential, creating gaps at the senior management levels.

Parting ways could be voluntary or forced due to mergers and acquisitions, governance issues or genuine lack of opportunities from the point of view of the candidate.

4 Identified high potential candidates not keen to take up roles

Some of the identified candidates are not keen to take up senior management roles due to various pressures and the challenges incumbent upon that role. The level of commitment required, mutual trust and compliance to governance and organisational structures place constraints on potential successors. Sometimes it may be a combination of one or more factors that they are not comfortable dealing with and hence, they leave the organisation.

5 Talent management and retention issues

The organisation is unable to retain good talent who have the potential to be part of the succession line. Reasons for this include insufficient compensation and benefits package, lack of long-term potential from an organisational perspective, absence or lack of proper management support and vision. And in most family-run businesses, reasons include not being part of the family structure or lack of a close relationship to the owning family.

THE WAY FORWARD – AN EYE INTO THE FUTURE

Grooming a suitable candidate to take over from the incumbent is an ongoing process as an organisation matures and moves forward. It is never too late or too early to formulate a strategy for effective succession planning.

It would be worthwhile to consider these four strategies in coming up with succession planning mechanisms:

Keep an eye on the future and plan for it

It is crucial to consider the next line of leaders for the future. All potential hires should be prepared to take over should the incumbent leave suddenly.

As part of a long-term people strategy and career development initiatives within the organisation, employees should be groomed for future roles.

You will need to identify what are the roles required in the future as well as the skill sets and competencies required to take the company forward.

Incorporate external benchmarking

Talent management and development is a critical aspect of every business. Talent acquisition and development plays a vital role in ensuring that the organisation has the right people in the right place, at the right time.

As an organisation, planning ahead also involves looking at what the competition does to develop future leaders. This will give your company new ideas and help in coming up with an appropriate strategy as you prepare to face the ongoing war for talent.

TO read the rest of Venkat’s story and his advice for how your organisation can be best prepared for the future, type in the shortened link: http://bit.ly/2zoolRN

PLANNING FOR A SMOOTH TRANSITION

LEADERSHIP ISSUES CRUCIAL FOR SUSTAINABLE ORGANISATIONS

Checklist

Self-driven
Enjoys flexible work hours
Great interpersonal skills

BE OUR PARTNER

Leaderonomics is expanding and we are looking for partners to work with. If you fit the bill (including a heart of gold, because we go the extra mile) then you are probably who we’re looking for.

Email us at info@leaderonomics.com to get in touch.

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

Venkat is a HR consultant and trainer at MHRM who believes that it is never too late to carve out a succession plan for a business. He hopes business leaders will take heed of the importance of building future leaders. To engage Leaderonomics to identify and build your organisation’s next-gen leaders, email us at training@leaderonomics.com
WANT TO BE A GREAT CEO? BE A GREAT PRODUCT MANAGER FIRST

An UNCONVENTIONAL ROUTE TO THE TOP MAY MAKE YOU A BETTER BOSS

By JEFF HAHN

on the lookout for new ideas and potential products. Sometimes, he'd present his work to his colleagues, and if they liked it, they'd add their suggestions to it.

2. MAKE THE HARD INVESTMENT DECISIONS

Once you've identified a new direction for the company, you need to make tough decisions about where to allocate your resources. This requires both vision and boldness, as well as the ability to make tough choices when necessary.

3. NAVIGATE THE 30-DAY AND THREE-YEAR LEVELS

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So, you see, there are many paths to becoming a great CEO. The key is to be open-minded, to be willing to learn from others, and to always strive to improve yourself.

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SO YOU HAVE GRADUATED, WHAT’S NEXT? INTERVIEW AND INTERNSHIP ADVICE FOR NAVIGATING THE JOB MARKET

By TAMARA JAYNE

Graduating is a huge milestone. Congratulations! So you’re done with university, college, or maybe high school. Now what?

Getting a job is sometimes easier said than done, so how do you take that next step?

We met with human resources leader Justin Kho to ask him some of the common questions graduates have when they enter the workplace and how to be best prepared for interviews.

What should I bring to an interview session? Are all the most important ones? “In most instances, bringing only the most important ones will suffice,” says Justin.

Bigger corporations tend to ask you to bring them depending on their standard operation procedure, but few tend to ask for them specifically nowadays. “Bring anything that you wish to talk about and which you think will impress the interviewer. For example outstanding awards, recommendation letters, pictures of your social work you were involved in, the events you organised etc. These will show your interviewer more about you and your strengths to complement your curriculum vitae.”

Will there be a test? That usually depends on the type of role for which you are applying. Usually technical positions will require prospective candidates to sit for one, such as a coding test for a technology developer position. Interviews are a form of assessment anyway, so you should take the whole thing as a test and expect a few curve-balls.

There are some interesting interviews like group activities or presentations which interviewers will observe and assess accordingly.

Will other sectors take me in even if I do not have the right qualifications? Not for technical roles like mechanical engineering or architecture, but for roles like marketing, sales, technology (if you have learned to code yourself), and design where skills are more transferable, employers might turn a blind eye to your industry experience or even your qualifications. They will look at your attitude and willingness to contribute.

What are the appropriate questions to ask the interviewer during an interview? There are questions that you should ask the company inside out and ask big picture questions to show you understand the business and where it’s heading to.

Going in, you should already understand the company’s values, culture and direction and ask your interviewer follow-up questions. This shows that you have done your homework and that you are keen to see how you will fit into the company. Asking questions specific to the role for which you are applying is great as well. Questions such as: “What are the major challenges of the role?”, “What are the key factors to being successful in this position in the first three to six months?” or “What will my day-to-day responsibilities be?”

Show that you are looking to engage from the get-go.

How and when should I bring up the topic about salaries/benefits/compensation? Discussing money is an awkward topic for many of us and, as a general rule of thumb, try to not ask about it in the first interview.

The second interview onwards is preferable and even then, leave it to the final few questions of the interview. You don’t want to start the meeting with “What’s my pay” just be polite and inquire about the salary package for the role at an appropriate time.

If I have a low CGPA, will they still hire me? Yes for more forward-thinking companies. Traditional multi-national corporations might have a set criteria for hiring. With that being said, more and more companies are starting to look at skill set and experience compared with CGPAs.

Should I be paid for my internship? For most internships, there is usually a basic allowance. However, if the role is in a company or industry that you absolutely want to get into, then do it for free if you have to. The experience is priceless and your future self will thank you for it.

How do I ask for an allowance for an internship? As with applying for a full-time position, it should be fair from the first question you ask, but it is nevertheless important to inquire if an allowance is allocated for the internship.

How do I know what career path is right for me? There is always a learning curve to anybody’s career and it may take years to figure out what you truly wish to do with your life. Obviously a good starting point will be your qualifications, degree, which subjects you excelled in at school, but another train of thought would be to try the jobs you’d always dreamt of doing when you were young.

For example, music, comedy, arts, sports or technology – the chances are if you have something that you were passionate about as a child, you can find a career that will leverage that interest. As with anything, there can be a lot of trial and error. Don’t be afraid to take on a new position or a change of career as it will likely help point you in the right direction in the long-run.

How will I know if a company is right for me? It’s impossible to give a definitive answer to this, but usually you will just know.

There must be a reason you applied for that position and you may have gotten a good feel for the company from your research and trip to the office for interview. It sounds cliché, but follow your gut.

The interviewer hasn’t replied to me yet even though he said he would. How long should I wait?

Or should I continue to send out my resume? Follow up with your interviewer – either via email or over the phone. Nowadays it is rare for young people to show that kind of initiative and you may also get a chance to build a relationship with the interviewer, which is important.

You will also get closure on why they’re not getting back to you, and find out if you can do anything to boost your chances.

IN A NUTSHELL

Moving into this new chapter of your life is naturally going to feel nerve-wrecking. Yet, navigating the career ladder can be as exciting as it is confusing.

At this early stage, job rejection can feel like the end of the world, but it is important to take it as an opportunity to learn more about yourself and keep improving.

Continue to sharpen your skills, take as many opportunities as you can to improve yourself and your resume to help boost your confidence.

By TAMARA JAYNE

tamara.jayne@leaderonomics.com

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We met with human resources leader Justin Kho to ask him some of the common questions graduates have when they enter the workplace and how to be best prepared for interviews.

What should I bring to an interview session? Are all the most important ones? “In most instances, bringing only the most important ones will suffice,” says Justin.

Bigger corporations tend to ask you to bring them depending on their standard operation procedure, but few tend to ask for them specifically nowadays. “Bring anything that you wish to talk about and which you think will impress the interviewer. For example outstanding awards, recommendation letters, pictures of your social work you were involved in, the events you organised etc. These will show your interviewer more about you and your strengths to complement your curriculum vitae.”

Will there be a test? That usually depends on the type of role for which you are applying. Usually technical positions will require prospective candidates to sit for one, such as a coding test for a technology developer position. Interviews are a form of assessment anyway, so you should take the whole thing as a test and expect a few curve-balls.

There are some interesting interviews like group activities or presentations which interviewers will observe and assess accordingly.

Will other sectors take me in even if I do not have the right qualifications? Not for technical roles like mechanical engineering or architecture, but for roles like marketing, sales, technology (if you have learned to code yourself), and design where skills are more transferable, employers might turn a blind eye to your industry experience or even your qualifications. They will look at your attitude and willingness to contribute.

What are the appropriate questions to ask the interviewer during an interview? There are questions that you should ask the company inside out and ask big picture questions to show you understand the business and where it’s heading to.

Going in, you should already understand the company’s values, culture and direction and ask your interviewer follow-up questions. This shows that you have done your homework and that you are keen to see how you will fit into the company. Asking questions specific to the role for which you are applying is great as well. Questions such as: “What are the major challenges of the role?”, “What are the key factors to being successful in this position in the first three to six months?” or “What will my day-to-day responsibilities be?”

Show that you are looking to engage from the get-go.

How and when should I bring up the topic about salaries/benefits/compensation? Discussing money is an awkward topic for many of us and, as a general rule of thumb, try to not ask about it in the first interview.

The second interview onwards is preferable and even then, leave it to the final few questions of the interview. You don’t want to start the meeting with “What’s my pay” just be polite and inquire about the salary package for the role at an appropriate time.

If I have a low CGPA, will they still hire me? Yes for more forward-thinking companies. Traditional multi-national corporations might have a set criteria for hiring. With that being said, more and more companies are starting to look at skill set and experience compared with CGPAs.

Should I be paid for my internship? For most internships, there is usually a basic allowance. However, if the role is in a company or industry that you absolutely want to get into, then do it for free if you have to. The experience is priceless and your future self will thank you for it.

How do I ask for an allowance for an internship? As with applying for a full-time position, it should be fair from the first question you ask, but it is nevertheless important to inquire if an allowance is allocated for the internship.

How do I know what career path is right for me? There is always a learning curve to anybody’s career and it may take years to figure out what you truly wish to do with your life. Obviously a good starting point will be your qualifications, degree, which subjects you excelled in at school, but another train of thought would be to try the jobs you’d always dreamt of doing when you were young.

For example, music, comedy, arts, sports or technology – the chances are if you have something that you were passionate about as a child, you can find a career that will leverage that interest. As with anything, there can be a lot of trial and error. Don’t be afraid to take on a new position or a change of career as it will likely help point you in the right direction in the long-run.

How will I know if a company is right for me? It’s impossible to give a definitive answer to this, but usually you will just know.

There must be a reason you applied for that position and you may have gotten a good feel for the company from your research and trip to the office for interview. It sounds cliché, but follow your gut.

The interviewer hasn’t replied to me yet even though he said he would. How long should I wait?

Or should I continue to send out my resume? Follow up with your interviewer – either via email or over the phone. Nowadays it is rare for young people to show that kind of initiative and you may also get a chance to build a relationship with the interviewer, which is important.

You will also get closure on why they’re not getting back to you, and find out if you can do anything to boost your chances.
MAXIMISING YOUR LEADERSHIP IMPACT IN A V.U.C.A. WORLD

THRIVING IN TIMES OF VOLATILITY, UNCERTAINTY, COMPLEXITY AND AMBIGUITY

By ERIC LAU
editor@leaderonomics.com

The world’s landscape in the 21st century is vastly different from that of previous generations. Not only are there major shifts and changes in every fragment of our society, but the pace and frequency of these changes are more intense. When I bought my new car a couple of years ago, I was excited because it came with a built-in GPS navigator. But today, thanks to Waze, my car’s GPS navigator is practically useless because, although it gives me directions, it does not provide traffic conditions. The phones we use become obsolete after two years. One localised incident of a terrorist attack can cripple an entire nation’s tourism industry overnight. Disease outbreaks like SARS and Ebola and natural disasters like tsunamis and earthquakes have the ability to deliver massive blows to the social and economic dynamics of entire nations.

Given all the above, the acronym VUCA best describes the world we live in today. VUCA stands for volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity. This term originated from the United States Army War College to describe the conditions resulting from the Cold War. This concept has since been adopted throughout the world of leadership and management to describe the challenging conditions that businesses go through. Today’s business leaders must have an appetite to embrace VUCA. We don’t have a choice. We either prepare ourselves to lead effectively in the midst of chaos or we simply fall prey and become victims. Here are three leadership principles that will help us lead successfully in times of uncertainty:

PRINCIPLE #1: HAVE AN UNQUENCHABLE APPETITE TO LEARN

In an ever-changing environment, leaders need to have a huge appetite to learn. Futurist and philosopher Alvin Toffler once wrote: “The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn, and relearn.” Knowledge is power. However, there are also cycles of knowledge relevance. Knowledge that is vital today may very well be irrelevant tomorrow. Hence, in a VUCA world, leaders need to have:

1. The desire to learn: This puts the leader ahead of the learning curve to attain the necessary knowledge and skill sets in order to be successful in the present and also to have the foresight to anticipate the challenges in the future.

2. The humility to unlearn: Much of the failures experienced by leaders and organisations are due to their unwillingness to innovate and explore new ways of doing things. The arrogance of insisting that “it has always worked in the past” will only bring calamity in the future.

3. The urgency to realign: When it comes to surviving and even thriving in a VUCA environment, timeliness in taking the right action is of utmost importance. This can only happen when leaders and their teams have a sense of urgency to quickly gain new knowledge and skills to address the new realities. In a 2014 White Paper presented by Centre for Creative Leadership, Adam Mitchellson and Robert Morris suggested that there are five facets of learning agile behaviour. They are:

   • **Innovating**: Agile learners are not afraid to challenge the status quo.
   • **Performing**: Agile learners remain calm in the face of difficulty.
   • **Reflecting**: Agile learners take time to reflect on their experiences.
   • **Risking**: Agile learners purposefully put themselves in challenging situations.
   • **Defending**: Agile learners are simply open to learning and resist the temptation to become defensive in the face of adversity.

Effective leaders need to have learning agility. Simply put, learning agility is having the ability to remain open to new ways of thinking and to continuously learn new skills. This is a non-negotiable for 21st century leaders who want to thrive in a VUCA environment.

PRINCIPLE #2: HAVE A RESOLUTE MINDSET TO EMBRACE CHANGE

A VUCA environment is all about change. Very often these changes are forced upon us whether we like them or not. Effective leaders don’t resist change. When change does happen, good leaders are neither surprised by it nor reject it.

Good leaders embrace change. In fact, great leaders change before change is even needed. They are always ahead of the innovation curve. These leaders have great strategic insights to anticipate VUCA conditions. Consequently, they will build strategies, processes, culture and crisis management plans to successfully mitigate difficult times.

I recently provided leadership consultation to a multinational organisation that experienced major cultural issues that affected their team dynamics. There were many expatriates in the organisation as the Malaysian office was their regional hub. For example, one of their sub-teams of six people comprised of people from four different nationalities. Added to the complexity were other diversity factors such as gender, language barriers and generation gaps. Moreover, they had a flexible “work from home” arrangement which led to much conflict. For example, one of their sub-teams of six people comprised of people from four different nationalities. Added to the complexity were other diversity factors such as gender, language barriers and generation gaps. Moreover, they had a flexible “work from home” arrangement which led to much conflict.

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Eric Lau is a strategic leader with a relentless belief in people. His personal mission is to inspire and influence others to rise up to their full potential and calling. Eric is a leadership consultant and trainer and regularly leads training sessions in the areas of leadership, management and personal development. To get in touch with him, e-mail editor@leaderonomics.com

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COMPANIES have long recognised that it takes more than just bottom-line profits to sustain their business model. Ironically, there is a need for non-monetary focus areas in order to keep the money coming in! This is an issue of value-based sustainability. In this article, five areas of common failures are highlighted as why corporate values start off with plenty of good intentions but fail to deliver when it comes to daily employee attitudes and behaviours. These failures are so ordinary that many organisations have accepted them as “ground reality”, but it need not be the case.

ORDINARY REASON #1: STRATEGIC PLANNING RETREATS

- Matters of strategic importance are usually debated and discussed within the confines of senior leadership – usually held in an island resort over three days and two nights. What normally happens is a predictable sequence of events:
  1. Plenty of flip-charts and slogans are created.
  2. There might even be a “battle-cry” or catchy phrase invented.
  3. The process of merchandising then takes place – badges, posters, campaigns, etc.
  4. Everybody gets excited for a while.
  5. Gradually, the old ways start creeping back in.
  6. Time to plan for another retreat!

Strategic retreats fail for the simple reason that leaders are disengaged from their employees throughout the year. So what is talked and discussed during the strategic sessions are favourite “hobby horses” and “pet ideas” with no grounding in grass-roots reality. Everyone leaves the wonderful retreats feeling good but not feeling the ground.

Here’s the tip: Before you plan for the next breakthrough strategic retreat, spend time getting to know your troops. Get to know their stresses, pains, struggles and challenges. When you are able to connect their core pain with your core values – then you have a powerful organisational culture coming your way!

ORDINARY REASON #2: REGULAR TEAM MEETINGS

There is a difference between communication and conversations. Much of what is happening is the boss communicating to the employees on assigned corporate expectations without addressing the possible responses from individuals. All corporate values rise and fall upon the attitude and behaviour of the individual. No corporate memo is going to change the way employees work unless steps are taken to converse with them, i.e. talk with them rather than talk to them.

While there is nothing wrong with regular team communications, you ought to consider that matters of attitude and behaviour require that the leader speaks to the heart of the employee.

Here’s the tip: In addition to focusing on preparing great motivational speeches in team meetings, take time to have one-on-one conversations – especially with high potential employees. Conversations allow the exchange of ideas, thinking and most of all, it affords you with the space to listen.

Being attentive to the individual is one of the greatest gifts of appreciation you can offer to another fellow human being. The saying is true – people don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care. Conversation is a way to communicate not what you know but to show how much you care.

ORDINARY REASON #3: BEING A NICE MANAGER

The person in authority has two important and equal mandates:

1. To reward those who do well.
2. To reprimand those who do not.

Many managers are comfortable with the first role but when it comes to confronting non-performers or those who do not adhere to stated corporate values, it is not done immediately. When leaders do not uphold high standards, they get what they tolerate.

When non-compliance is tolerated, a negative message is sent to those who do comply – i.e. the leaders have double standards – in short, there is hypocrisy.

Here’s the tip: As a leader, you must be comfortable with both recognising and reprimanding your employees. Do not wait until the performance appraisal to have that conversation. Remember, culture and morale are affected by daily leadership actions, not spurts of motivational speeches.

ORDINARY REASON #4: CREATING MORE POLICIES

Policies are great – it shows that planners are working hard! That’s it.

Policies are needed because people do not have enough motivation and strength of character to self-govern their behaviour. While there will always be a need for policies and guidelines, we ought to realise its limitations because, while policies spell out the boundaries, they do not inspire people to stay within them.

Here’s the tip: Before you come up with another rule, remember that matters of value and character are more caught than taught. For example, do not set a rule for punctuality until you have demonstrated it consistently yourself. Then when the rule is introduced, it is a confirmation of what you have already been doing.

ORDINARY REASON #5: TEAM BUILDING PROGRAMMES

Team building programmes are great fun! It creates a lot of energy and enthusiasm during the training period but it rarely addresses the one vital principle necessary to connect values with behaviour – people follow those whom they admire.

The wise organisation is one which puts priority to enhance the reputation of those in leadership. In other words, leaders are equipped and trained to “get their act together.” Are leaders in your company trained to resolve conflicts, hold courageous conversations, motivate for performance and coach for excellence?

Without these basic skills in people management, then the team building programme rests on a weak foundation.

Here’s the tip: Before you think about rolling out a mass team-building programme to communicate corporate values, plan for the training of all people managers first. Without their personal commitment, there exists that critical “execution gap”, and the team-building programme ends up being more of a holiday trip rather than an opportunity for self-improvement.

VALUES ARE RELATIONAL

Corporate values are not designed to increase profits. Rather, it is designed to inspire those who are responsible to bring in the profits. Values fail when managers look to them for conveying instructions rather than inspiration, results rather than reputation, curriculum rather than character.

In other words, the design of corporate values does not start in the board room – it begins in the ordinary interactions in the work room, the office cubicle, the coffee place. How is the relational perspective of your corporate values?
Leaders With a Dark Side

By LOUISA DEVADASON

“NOT all psychopaths are in prison—some are in the boardroom,” criminal psychologist Robert Hare declared during his aptly titled lecture, The Predators Among Us.

Psychopathy is one of the three “dark traits” personality traits—the other two being Machiavellianism and narcissism. People with any of these traits are usually worse than your standard bullish colleague. These are traits are usually worse than your other two being Machiavellianism and the “dark triad” personality traits—the “dark triad” is realistic, deceptive and focuses on self-interest.

Machiavellianism: egotism, and a lack of empathy.

Narcissism: grandiosity, pride, and without good conscience.

Psychopathy is one of the three traits fuelled by a healthy level of self-interest. The Machiavellian types also tend to show up in executive roles because they’re cunning and ruthless in twisting people into doing what they want to do—it is first nature to them. They’ll take credit for the work of others and throw anyone under the bus if it means they come out on top. Once they reach the top, they stay there and are tough and domineering—creating an environment where many fear questioning them and avoid being on their radar. You find that only the most passive or “yes men” type of employees remain in such an organisation for a prolonged period of time.

Conversely, while many of the traits associated with Machiavellianism can make these people your worst nightmare—they are also acutely more observant and attentive to detail. Steve Jobs, Bill Gates and Abraham Lincoln are all said to be high on Machiavellianism as the trait can be a positive trait in making a person extremely pragmatic and adaptive. Psychopaths are considered the most toxic of the triad with a powerful impact on employees’ mood, mental health and job performance. Psychopathic bosses also disrupt their employees work-life balance leading to psychological distress and are linked with diminished corporate responsibility as well as reduced productivity.

Psychopaths are not ideal leaders as they don’t possess any sense of thought or care for those around them. They are successful nonetheless because they are often bold, confident and focused—grabbing what’s best for themselves, qualities tailor-made for success in the 21st century.

While extremes of the Dark Triad are counterproductive to companies, peers and workplace environments, many of these traits can be a boon to businesses and innovative risk taking when managed correctly. Management of this starts with an empowered human resources department that can assess the traits of their hires and ensure the office has a strong process in place.

Processes are what hold a strong business together and should go right across the organisation. It makes everyone accountable and gives more passive members of the workforce a chance to speak up. When companies don’t have a cohesive system, heads of departments can run wild and do anything and everything completely detached from the company’s vision and mission.

Additionally, the effects of these personalities can be lessened or made more functional through training. Those with the traits can be trained to manage their behaviours while others can be trained to compliment or better cope with these intense individuals. Why is this important? Because while personality is an important career catalyst, Dark Triad traits serve the individual and remain only beneficial to the individual rather than to their team and their organisation.

Characteristics of the Dark Triads

Narcissism: grandiosity, pride, egotism, and a lack of empathy.

Machiavellianism: manipulative, exploitive, doesn’t think morality is realistic, deceptive and focuses on self-interest.

Psychopathy: offensive or insen- sitive behaviour, impulsive, selfish, possesses shallow emotions and without good conscience.

Research suggests that over a third of us work under bosses whose leader- ship style can be deemed “dysfunc- tional” due to any combination of the Dark Triad. So, if your gut has been telling you your boss is off his or her rocker, chances are you are on to some- thing—and you’re not alone either.

“The cultures that exist in organi- sations may, in some ways, enable these individuals to remain in, and even advance within, the workplace,” explains Kevin Rose, an assistant pro- fessor of organisational leadership and learning at the University of Louisville, and the lead author of a recent study on bad bosses.

Narcissism is likely the most com- mon trait among “dysfunctional” bosses simply because studies found that narcissists tend to get the far- west ahead. This is often because, at first meeting, we find narcissists more likeable and interesting while masking their traits for competence and good leadership.

Most boardrooms welcome some- one with assertiveness and creativity— traits fuelled by a healthy level of self-confidence. The part that becomes hard to manage is the overwhelming sense of superiority, recklessness and contempt for others that is rooted in someone with strong narcissism.

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The average person has 70,000 thoughts each day, and if you don’t learn to organise the thoughts in your mind, they have the potential to wreak havoc on your productivity. When you succumb to the flurry of thoughts running through your head, your mind becomes disorganised and, the more you ruminate on intrusive thoughts, the more power you give them. Most of our thoughts are just that—thoughts, not facts. When you find yourself believing the negative, distracting, and pessimistic things your inner voice says, it’s very hard to slow down the momentum of your thoughts.

In a recent study conducted at the National Institute on Ageing, it was found that allowing your mind to be disorganised doesn’t just feel bad, it’s also actually bad for you. A disorganised mind leads to high stress, chronic negativity, and impulsivity. These states stifle productivity and contribute to a slew of health problems, including weight gain, heart disease, sleep problems, and migraine headaches.

Edward Hallowell, a therapist who helps people deal with disorganised minds, describes what happens when someone falls victim to a myriad of invasive thoughts: “They make impulsive judgments, angrily rushing to bring closure. He is robbed of his flexibility, his sense of humour, and his ability to deal with the unknown. He forgets the big picture and the goals and values for which he stands. He loses his creativity and his ability to change plans.”

An organised mind, on the other hand, falls into a state of flow. Flow is a blissful state of balance, where you are fully immersed in a task, completely free from distracting thoughts. Flow states enable you to enjoy your work and perform at the peak of your potential. Research shows people working in a state of flow are five times more productive than they’d otherwise be.

Here are steps that I use to organise and declutter my mind, find flow, and keep myself on track for a productive day.

**Step 1: Find the right amount of challenge in what you do**

When you’re trying to get work done, it’s easy to lose focus and succumb to intrusive thoughts when the task at hand is too challenging or too easy. We thrive on a healthy challenge — something that simulates us without being so difficult that it produces anxiety or so simple that it induces boredom. When you consciously and carefully choose a task, you greatly increase your chance of achieving flow.

**Step 2: Take Control of Your Emotions**

While it’s impossible to control how things make you feel, you have complete control over how you react to your emotions. First, you need to be honest with yourself about what you are feeling and why you are feeling it. From there, it’s much easier to channel the emotion into producing the behaviour that you want.

The key is to identify and label your emotions and tackle your work without addressing them, they will slowly eat away at you and impair your focus. Move forward. If you try to stifle your emotions and tackle your work without addressing them, they will slowly eat away at you and impair your focus.

**Step 3: Sustain your focus**

When you succumb to the flurry of thoughts running through your head, your mind becomes disorganised and, the more you ruminate on intrusive thoughts, the more power you give them.

**Head over to** http://bit.ly/2eZNxOc **to read Travis’ last two steps towards working with an organised mind.**

By TRAVIS BRADBERRY

editor@leaderonomics.com

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**Step 2: Take Control of Your Emotions**

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The key is to identify and label your emotions and tackle your work without addressing them, they will slowly eat away at you and impair your focus. Move forward. If you try to stifle your emotions and tackle your work without addressing them, they will slowly eat away at you and impair your focus.

**Step 3: Sustain your focus**

When you succumb to the flurry of thoughts running through your head, your mind becomes disorganised and, the more you ruminate on intrusive thoughts, the more power you give them.