BRINGING EDUCATION FULL CIRCLE

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There are more than 12 great leadership articles in this week’s pullout. However, we have some 50 new articles each month plus a library of 4,000 great videos, podcasts and articles at www.leaderonomics.com. Don’t miss out on greatness. Surf the site and grow as a leader today!
By SASHI LIM
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Are oftentimes inevitable manifestations of our own behaviour or actions. This is why we are sometimes influenced by the way we perform certain actions. Some common ways of social influence are when we influence others to follow our opinions, or when we are influenced by the decisions we make in a meeting room. Under the huge umbrella of social influence, one of the most important aspects that we can focus on today is conformity.

The nature of conformity is when we change our behaviour or actions to closely match those of others. The need to conform can be separated into two different types. First, the normative social influence – the need to act in ways that we feel will help others to like and accept us. We tend to match our opinions with the norms of society, which give us a sense of belonging to a group by intentionally or unintentionally aligning ourselves with others as a benchmark to be classified as “normal” and acceptable.

For example, you really dislike the personality of person A in the office because you cannot tolerate the way this person manifests their opinions and beliefs. Just because everyone else likes person A, you quietly engage in normative social influence just to fit in the group. Ever caught yourself in the act of following what is set to be the norm? For example, trying to like someone who is loved by everyone else even though you do not agree to it? That is normative social influence.

The next type of conformity is the informative social influence. This is where we extract cues from others when we are unclear on how to behave. Ever heard of the term “copycat”? Well, here is the “why” and “when” we copy others. Firstly, we feel the urge to follow the cues of another person’s behaviour when we do not know how to behave in a situation. For example, you are attending fine dining for the first time and do not know why there are so many different sizes of forks and spoons on your left and right; nor do you know how to use them. So, what will you do? You conform to the actions of people around you assuming that they know the functions of each utensil and when to use them. Secondly, it is difficult to make a decision when there are too many choices. You are on a shopping trip with your friends and stumble upon a nail parlour for a quick manicure. Since there are literally hundreds of colours to pick from, you get confused and seek advice or information from those around you to pick out a colour.

Lastly, crisis 101! When you are stuck in a situation and are desperate to make a decision, you look for someone who can make the decision for you instantly because you are in a time crunch. For example, where to eat. This is a problem we always face when it comes to deciding on a place to have our meals. Are you the person who always answers, “I don’t know, lah where to eat?” when it comes to the question of where to eat? Fear not, because there will always be that one person in your group who can make a decision for you instantly, and you always tend to appreciate their decisions because they somehow provide a solution for your growing pangs of hunger.

Informative social influence is basically the type of conformity that we oblige to when we are not sure of our own ability to make a decision. We then outsource it to someone else who can tell us what to do or, how to behave.

On the other hand, normative social influence is where people with lower self-esteem – or individuals who seek approval from others – will experience this influence. In a nutshell, be it social influence or peer influences, we as individuals do have the final say in things we choose to believe and react to. Always be aware of making a conscious decision regarding the issues you are facing to minimise the effects of social influences. Take opinions and advice as long as it does not affect your own integrity in decision-making.

Also, when you are cracking under pressure, do ensure you consider your personal preferences for choices rather than place too much focus on what other people are doing or saying.

Although the social influence and urge to comply with conformity might be extremely high in certain situations, do not forget that you have the ability to make your own choices at the end of the day.

By JACK CHIA
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When somebody mentions “office politics”, the foremost things that come to mind are the unpleasant memories we have of selfish manipulative co-workers, managers or subordinates. Politics is pervasive, and most of us have experienced it at least once in our careers. We might recall an instance when we have been blamed for someone else’s mistake, or when we have been bullied by jealous co-workers, or when an annoying colleague takes all the credit for our hard work. All these are oftentimes inevitable manifestations of politics in the workplace. In today’s world, the term “politics” is so loaded with negativity that most people associate it with the counterproductive aspects we see in the workplace. Social scientists who study politics in organisations tend to have a different view.

For psychologists like Professor Gerald Ferris, from Florida State University, politics is about understanding people and using that understanding to influence others. Organisational politics are not inherently good or bad – it is about how one uses them. In fact, according to Professor Ferris, having some political savvy could be vital in helping you along your career path. Nevertheless, this does not deny the fact that workplace politics can lead to negative and harmful consequences.

We will be looking at how politics can be harmful to an organisation, as well as some of the ways it can be beneficial if used wisely.

**THE DARK SIDE OF POLITICS**

As social beings, our ability to understand others and make them do what we want them to do often takes centre stage. Here are four ways that politics can have a harmful effect in the workplace.

#1 Power Corrupts

People can become carried away when they are entrusted with power. As the English historian, Lord Acton famously said, “Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” In a classic study by psychologist David Kipnis, participants made up of business majors were assigned to supervise their own teams to complete an administrative task. Half of the participants were given the power to punish their teammates (by reducing their pay or firing them), while the other half received no such privileges.

The leaders who were given power were twice as likely to threaten their team with punishment, more likely to berate their teammates on their quality of work and were less willing to work with their teammates in future.

The leaders that received no power, on the other hand, had to rely on their ability to keep workers happy and persuade them to contribute more. Today, changes in organisational structure have helped to reduce the damaging effect of coercive power, such as having a flatter hierarchy, removing layers of bureaucracy and promoting a work culture that focuses on equality rather than authority.

To read the rest of Jack’s story, his three more reasons for why office politics are a curse and the four reasons they could actually help, visit bit.ly/officetalks

HOW WE COMPLY WITH CONFORMITY

BRIDGING THE GAP OF PEER PRESSURE

By SASHI LIM
editor@leaderonomics.com

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By TRAVIS BRADBERRY
editor@leaderonomics.com

When it comes to success, it’s easy to think that people blessed with brains are inevitably going to leave the rest of us in the dust. But new research from Stanford University will change your mind (and your attitude).

Psychologist Carol Dweck has spent her entire career studying attitude and performance, and her latest study shows that your attitude is a better predictor of your success than your IQ.

Dweck found that people’s core attitudes fall into one of two categories—a fixed mindset or a growth mindset. With a fixed mindset, you believe you are who you are and you cannot change. This creates problems when you’re challenged because anything that appears to be more than you can handle is bound to make you feel hopeless and overwhelmed.

People with a growth mindset believe that they can improve with effort. They outperform those with a fixed mindset, even when they have a lower IQ, because they embrace challenges, treating them as opportunities to learn something new. Common sense would suggest that having ability, like being smart, inspires confidence. It does, but only when the going is easy.

The deciding factor in life is how you handle setbacks and challenges. People with a growth mindset welcome setbacks with open arms.

According to Dweck, success in life is all about how you deal with failure. She describes the approach to failure of people with the growth mindset this way: “Failure is information—we label it failure, but it’s more like, ‘This didn’t work, and I’m a problem solver, so I’ll try something else.’”

Regardless of on which side of the chart you fall, you can make changes and develop a growth mindset. What follows are some strategies that will fine-tune your mindset and help you make certain of them.

1. Stay humble. People who have been successful in life are blessed with humility. Warren Buffett recommends finding your truest passions using—what he calls—the five/25 technique. Write down the 25 things that you care about the most. Then, cross out the bottom 20. The remaining five are your true passions. Everything else is merely a distraction.

2. Be passionate. Empowered people pursue their passions relentlessly. There’s always going to be someone who’s more naturally talented than you are, but what you lack in talent, you can make up for in passion.

3. Take action. It’s not that people with a growth mindset are able to overcome their fears because they are braver than the rest of us; it’s just that they know fear and anxiety are paralyzing emotions and that the best way to overcome this paralysis is to take action.

4. Then go the extra mile (or two). Empowered people give it their all, even on their worst days. They’re always pushing themselves to go the extra mile. One of Bruce Lee’s protégés ran three miles every day with him. One day, they were about to hit the three-mile mark when Bruce said, “Let’s do two more.” His student was tired and said, “I’ll die if I run two more.” Bruce’s response? “Then do it.” The young man became so angry that he finished the full five miles. Exhausted and furious, he confronted Bruce about his comment, and Bruce explained it this way: “Quit and you might as well be dead. If you always put limits on what you can do, physical or anything else, it’ll spread over into the rest of your life. It’ll spread into your work, into your morality, into your entire being.”

5. Expect results. People with a growth mindset know that they’re going to fail from time to time, but they never let that keep them from expecting results. Expecting results keeps you motivated and feeds the cycle of empowerment.

6. Be flexible. Everyone encounters unanticipated adversity. People with an empowered, growth-oriented mindset embrace adversity as a means for improvement, as opposed to something that holds them back. When an unexpected situation challenges an empowered person, they flex until they get results.

7. Don’t complain. When things don’t go your way. Complaining is an obvious sign of a fixed mindset. A growth mindset looks for opportunity in everything, so there’s no room for complaints.

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER: By keeping track of how you respond to the little things, you can work every day to keep yourself on the right side of the chart above.

Attitude is More Important Than IQ

The Seven Traits of People with a Growth Mindset

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.
FINDING THE RIGHT BALANCE

LET YOUR CHILD PURSUE THEIR PASSIONS AT THEIR OWN PACE

By ISABEL TAN
editor@leaderonomics.com

It is built into every parent’s DNA to have expectations for their children because they want what is best for them. However, humans are extremists and are sucked into the pressures surrounding us to compare. As a result, we tend to overprotect our children by imparting high expectations that hinder and prevent the child’s growth which may fasten with a different approach. Before trying to groom children to grow up well, we have to also examine ourselves and see if our lives reflect a good example of who we want our children to be. Over the years working as a music therapist, I find that children are very observant and good at modelling behaviour and gestures. One of the challenges in my line of work is to manage parents’ expectations as some want their child to progress as quickly as possible without addressing the child’s needs. I have encountered several children learning by following instructions which may lead to children just blindly imitating without actually understanding the concept behind it. Hence, I allow some choice and control by choosing favourite songs or actions that complement the goals and objectives of my session. I found that, by doing that, some children learn and improve at a faster rate. Parents usually consult a music therapist because they find that their child has an interest in music. It’s great that parents are able to identify when their child has a passion. However, I believe that exposure to different hobbies would also reveal a child’s strengths or interests that would groom them in their growing up phase. If a child does not do well or does not show any improvement or interest in any skill, it does not mean that they must immediately stop pursuing it. Neurodiversity teaches us to embrace their identity as a child no matter how different they may be from the majority of society. All children have varied progress rates which is why we, as caregivers and educators, should support them until they are independent enough to make life decisions. Dealing with children with special needs, some parents can be a bit more anxious and want to pave the way for their child especially if they are non-verbal. However, I have observed that even these children are able to speak their own mind and communicate through non-verbal gestures. Some parents have also trained their child from young to write a journal entry to pen down their thoughts as well as to communicate their wishes and feelings to their parents. This shows that nothing is impossible if we have the right support and approach in grooming our child. Some space for freedom in creating their own identity would allow them to live more independently and allow them to overcome hardships in life more easily. We, as educators and parents, need to always have faith and leverage a child’s own strengths, abilities and creativity to explore and learn to live like a child. Allowing mistakes, as long as the child is not harmed in any manner, will also help a child develop. We need a constant reminder that every human being has their own strengths and gifts that are hidden unless they are explored and discovered freely. Children are curious beings and like to explore in the initial stages of their lives. Hence, it is a good sign that children have that instinct to try and use their senses in gaining knowledge of the world. The world may be dangerous but rest assured, as long as we are there to guide them to the right track, they can always travel different routes to get to the destination. We just have to do our best, find a balance between their strengths and our acceptance, impart every experience we have learnt and leave the rest to the child.

“AS THE CEO, YOUR LEADERSHIP IS ONLY AS GOOD AS WHAT OTHERS SAY BEHIND YOUR BACK”

Joseph Tan
CEO & Founder of Leaderonomics Good Monday

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The invention of the steam engine was one of the key milestones in the first industrial revolution during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The first locomotive railway, established in 1825, turned the world upside down; the possibilities of easily being able to transport large cargo over great distance were boundless.

Two hundred years on and the world is abuzz with talk of the fourth industrial revolution – Industry 4.0. Cloud-based computing and the digital age are in full swing with the world a smaller place than ever and instant communication now the norm.

And yet, with all this innovation, the consistencies remain, the train.

**The Next Generation of Engineers**

Two and a half centuries ago, the first rail tracks were being laid before the first engines ran on coal being manually shovelled into a flaming fire pit. Today’s world of locomotion has moved with the times as driverless trains and the second-accurate running times have enhanced connectivity in many of the world’s most developed countries. The expansion of the brand new line Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) line in Kuala Lumpur has been the talk of the town with new suburbs and areas of the city now accessible via public transport. With the advancements in technology though, new challenges have arisen and the need for an upskilled workforce have become paramount.

To combat this need, the Asian Rail Academy (ARA) has been launched to skill, upskill and reskill those currently working in the industry as well as the next wave of technicians and engineers. With this being the digital age however, the standard classroom training no longer suffices. Instead, ARA will use the latest in virtual reality simulations.
The dawn of industry 4.0

The evolution of manufacturing and technology is different from the workplaces of today. In the 18th century, factories were not only dependent on the invention of machines, but also on markets and transportation. In the 19th century, the introduction of electricity and the internal combustion engine allowed for the mechanization of manufacturing processes. In the 20th century, automation and robotics revolutionized the manufacturing industry. Today, however, the fourth industrial revolution is transforming the way in which we think about and use technology.

The age of our ownership is coming to an end. We are moving from the ownership age to the sharing age. This has made the sharing economy possible, and we will liberate people from the drudgery of routine work.

At the same time, automated factories will complete the automation of the production process. Organizations that plan to deploy manufacturing and automation technologies will need to think about how to integrate these technologies into their business processes.

The rise of 3D printing will make it possible to manufacture goods on demand, which will reduce the cost of production and increase the flexibility of supply chains. This will allow businesses to produce goods more efficiently and at a lower cost.

In or out of work, the Internet of Things will completely change the way in which we interact with our basic daily tasks, eliminating the drudgery of shopping, cleaning, and even cooking.

"Invisible" assistants in our kitchens, bathrooms, bedrooms, living rooms and offices will respond to every request and anticipate most of our needs. In the UK, delivery company Ocado has built an automated warehouse that selects and delivers over 100 items in minutes.

In or out of work, the Internet of Things will completely change the way in which we think about and use technology.

Research has shown that, in the last 35 years, there has been a steep decline in the number of jobs where levels of social skills are unimportant. By far the greatest growth has been in jobs that require high social skills because the modern economy creates wealth through creativity and the most effective way to foster creativity and successful is through collaboration.

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THERE’S NO SUCH THING AS DIFFERENT LEARNING STYLES

BELIEVING IN THEM IS STIFLING YOUR GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES

By ROSHAN THIRAN
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HOW would you describe your learning style? Are you a visual learner, or do you prefer to listen? Perhaps you enjoy learning through reading and writing, or prefer to take a more hands-on approach when developing your knowledge and skills.

Conventional wisdom has, for some time, suggested that we each learn best through one particular style. This has been particularly embraced in the education system, where teachers have been encouraged to provide support in fostering each student’s learning according to their preference. But this approach might be doing a disservice to students — as well as to adults who have bought into the idea — by taking away the opportunity for them to better develop their learning through a number of ways.

I would rather have someone in my company for 10 years who has gained experience across two or three roles than someone who has spent a decade doing the same job, year-in and year-out.

A good teacher incorporates human rights values into their everyday lessons.

In March 2017, 30 eminent scientists put their signatures to a letter sent to The Guardian (UK) to say that there is no evidence that learning through a preferred style leads to achieving better results, and that there exists “a number of problems with the learning styles approach.” The letter goes on to add that categorising learners can lead to “the assumption of fixed or rigid learning style, which can impair motivation to apply oneself or adapt.”

Needless to say, although the issue relates to school education, and while students eventually leave formal education, many of our adult learning habits are shaped by our formative years.

The danger, then, seems to be that we could miss out on some valuable learning opportunities because an approach doesn’t fit “our style”.

PUSHING PEOPLE OUTSIDE THEIR SHELLS

At Leaderonomics, we try to give our colleagues fresh roles after a certain period of time. It’s done partly to give them a greater sense of what we’re working to achieve as a social enterprise, but most importantly, it is to provide them with new experiences and challenges outside their comfort zones.

Oftentimes, I’m approached by people who want to hand me their CV and enquire about the possibility of joining the Leaderonomics team. Many potential applicants will start by telling me something like they “have eight years of working experience”, which is great for them — but it tells me nothing about what they’ve learnt or how they’ve grown.

A person can have four years of work experience and picked up numerous skills and abilities across two or three challenging roles during that time. Conversely, someone could have carried out the same tasks in the same role at the same company for 20 years.

The second person might have spent five times as much time at the first person in the workplace, but they will have learnt a lot less due to a lack of growth and development.

ARE YOU LIMITING YOUR OWN POTENTIAL?

“Ah, but why would you want to hire a jack of all trades but a master of none?” some might contest.

Just like the learning styles “myth,” I would suggest that, because someone has experience in more than one area, it doesn’t necessarily mean they aren’t skilled performers in all of them.

After all, history is filled with people who have been highly-skilled across four or five (or more) fields.

It’s surely our limiting and misguided beliefs that narrow our potential and minimise the possibilities we might realise had we adopted a varied approach to what we learn and how we learn it?

In the past, I’ve had conversations where people have protested at being offered a new role. “But I’m comfortable where I am now,” they tell me, and therein lies the problem.

If a teacher or leader has any duty towards those under their guidance, it’s to help people push beyond their limiting beliefs and boundaries.

I would rather have someone in my company for 10 years who has gained experience across two or three roles than someone who has spent a decade doing the same job, year-in and year-out.

On a personal level, as a leader, I’d view the latter as more of a disservice towards the employee than the company.

Don’t get me wrong, doing anything outside our comfort zones is scary — few people enjoy being taken away from what they know. As the saying goes, comfort zones are beautiful places, but nothing ever grows there.

ARE YOU READY FOR A SHAKE-UP?

Of course, depending on the person, teachers and leaders have to use their judgment on how they encourage others to learn. Throwing a shy and reticent person into the deep end when they’re thriving in their current role could be problematic for all concerned.

While we should encourage others to learn in new ways and seek out new experiences, we should also be mindful to each person’s circumstances and find the best way to encourage and motivate them to take the first steps into an unfamiliar territory.

Even at Leaderonomics, where we love to throw people into the deep end of a new challenge, we always make it a priority to make sure that the person is ready first.

Learning through different styles and facing new experiences are what lead us to be better tomorrow than we are today. It’s what cultivates great ideas, creative solutions and innovative practices. It enables us to see things from entirely new perspectives.

By combining different methods of learning, we shake ourselves up and awaken to new possibilities that we would never have known from inside our comfort zones.

IN CONCLUSION

Trying out new things, taking a different approach, pushing ourselves out there — sure, it can be daunting — but it can also be (and often is) an exhilarating experience. And if I had RM10 for every time someone told me, “I wish I’d done this sooner”, I would be a very rich man indeed!
DIG YOUR HEELS IN ON YOUR PRINCIPLES AT ALL TIMES

By PREMA JAYABALAN
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MOST of us would have received our first dose of leadership from our parents. One key advice in leadership is to ‘never lose your principles even when the going gets tough.’ How do you stick to your principles when everything else around you seems to be falling apart? What are the key traits needed to ensure that you never let go of your beliefs even when in despair? I had the privilege of gaining some insights from a few people, on attributes that strengthen your principles. There are three traits that I believe can help you hold firm to your beliefs regardless of your situation and enable you to lead a life that is built on a solid foundation.

STANDING A FIRM GROUND
My late grandfather was a merchant who handled medical supplies. Business was flourishing when my mother was a child but my grandfather fell ill when she was 15, and business went downhill thereafter.

My grandparents were struggling to make ends meet. Thankfully their elder children were married and working but my mother and her brother were still in school.

When the situation worsened, my grandmother – a lady from an old school of thought – suggested that my mother stop attending school since she was a girl, to ease the burden of paying for two children’s education, but my grandfather would not hear of it. He emphasised the importance of education regardless of gender and did not allow my grandmother to persuade him.

He stood his ground for what he believed in and my mother completed her secondary education. Sadly, he did not live to see her graduate, but his stubbornness paid off as my mother went on to work in a well-known hospital for the next 38 years as a senior lab assistant.

Had she dropped out of school when she was younger, she would not have been able to secure the job which contributed to her family and put me and my sister in school.

At work, we are faced with multiple scenarios, a diverse workforce and a tendency to get carried away by following others blindly. At times, some of us may feel that following the majority will ensure we are liked by all.

However, standing a firm ground and not giving up on what you believe in merely to jump on the bandwagon, puts you one notch higher than the rest. Why? Because you are then perceived as one who is strong, determined and not easily influenced by others.

You are someone who will fight for what you believe is right and works hard towards proving yourself. You are someone who perseveres when everyone else gives in. Now, aren’t these the attributes of a budding leader that employers are seeking that you and your organisation do not drown in the negative situation.

INTEGRITY
Integrity – always doing the right thing, even when no one is watching.

I remember working with a friend a few years back. He was a team lead in a telemarketing division. At one time, most of his colleagues were taking the shorter and easier route, which at times was not 100% above board, in order to receive a good commission. But he was never bothered about it and never succumbed to what they were doing.

He held on to his principles of always having integrity even when he was not earning half as much as everyone else. I remember him going back with a satisfied and content demeanour for he knew his earnings for that day were purely through his own effort.

And so came the day to acknowledge the best team lead and he got the accolade. Yes, it was he and not the one who got the highest commission. You may think that no-one is watching but someone always is. Until today, if you ask him about anyone to whom he knows, you will always get positive and pleasant remarks. For me, that is an identity that will take you far in your career.

If you are known as one who has integrity, you will be able to shine in your career simply because your superiors will never hesitate to trust you with huge responsibilities and tasks, as they know you will give it your 100% even without any supervision.

THERE IS STILL ROOM TO GROW.

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STRETCH GOALS VS STRETCH EXPERIENCES

THE RIGHT QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE SETTING TEAM GOALS

By JOSEPH TAN
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OW often have you heard this in management meetings: “Our numbers are looking dismal, each one of you needs to take on a new set of stretched goals to push our company performance to the next level!” Everyone then leaves the meeting feeling so excited and enthusiastic to push themselves to achieve the much higher, stretched numbers. Or so, we think.

If stretching the goals is all it takes to push employees to greater profits and productivity, then performance management should be the most straightforward of all organizational development practices. Yet, it is more than just a numbers game.

In fact, the more we focus on numbers – the more numb we become. Unless, we fortify our approach with not just stretched figures but also with challenging experiences.

PRESSURE VALIDATES POTENTIAL

It is said that one’s character is like a teabag – you don’t know what is inside until it is placed in hot water. The optimum water temperature brings out the best fragrance and flavour in the tea. So it is with the performance of the employee – it requires the right mix of experiential elements to validate the espoused potential of the individual.

Confronting challenges produces advantageous benefits for aspiring leaders. It speeds up their learning curve, stretches their capacity and capability for high performance, and expands their horizons about what is possible for an organisation to achieve. Instead of just focusing on pushing the numbers game, capable leaders can challenge their teams to achieve significant work goals. In fact, these leaders themselves were likely assigned significant challenging experiences at key points in their careers while being given the freedom to determine how they achieve their outcomes.

It is not the absence of pressure which creates performance, rather it is the presence of the right type of stretched experiences which will develop the personal character from within for motivated performance. What constitutes the right type of pressure to be applied so that there is a breakthrough (and not breakdown) in performance?

1. The pressure to go beyond the job description.
2. The pressure to go beyond the skill description.

With the proper administration of the right types of pressure, the setting of stretched goals will no longer be an exercise in futility. It will become an investment in fruitfulness.

Organisations today require employees who are not stuck in their description and comfortable in their skills description. Once you have an individual who is both stuck and comfortable, no amount of stretched goals is going to move them on to that next level of performance.

BEYOND THE JOB

According to Gallup, only 33% of employees worldwide are engaged. The situation of being stuck in one’s job is fundamentally an issue of engagement. For the majority of workers who come to work every morning in a disengaged state, you are almost picturing them turning up with their hands and feet, but their hearts and minds are thousands of miles away.

It is no wonder then that the mere incantation of stretched numbers has little effect on most employees. The concept of stretched targets work only on employees who are already actively engaged – those whose hearts are already in their work.

What then is the type of “pressure” to be applied on disengaged teams? It is that which appeals to the aspirations of a higher cause, a common good that binds the team together in unity towards a vision that is not imposed, but one which is inspirational. Hence, here is the leadership question to ask even before you start dishing out the stretched goals:

Am I providing a clear and challenging vision for the team before I even talk about the stretched numbers? Your answer to the above will determine the readiness of your team to embrace the challenging experiences ahead and give them that extra tenacity to last through tough times.

BEYOND THE SKILLS

There are those who are of the view that the inability to meet stretched targets is due to employees who are not skilled or not competent enough to meet the demands of the job. While this can be the case, the leader should also be attentive to the motivational needs of the employees as well. When it comes to meeting the demands of stretched expectations, employees need to be working in an environment where they have the opportunity to do what they do best every day. Hence, while it is necessary that specific goals are set to move employees out of their comfort zone, leaders need to ask this critical question: “Am I building the skills of my team towards the area of their strengths?”

Leadership takes the right kind of energy necessary to rise to the expectations of the stretched goals. The principle is this – build up the performer first, then you will get the performance.

Without a focus on engagement and ownership, you may still get the high performance by command and control, but it will not be a sustainable performance.
HOW DO I FIND A GREAT MENTOR?

By KARIN HURT
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I can't tell you how many times someone has asked me to be their mentor and, when I asked what they were looking to accomplish, I was met with a blank stare. I guess they were just looking for me to start espousing wisdom to help get their career to the next level.

But mentoring doesn't work that way. To find a great mentor, start by being a rock star mentee.

FOUR WAYS TO BE A BETTER MENTEE

Just like everything else in your career, the more you put in, the more you get out. Show up with a plan to launch an enriching relationship.

1. Know What You're Looking to Accomplish

Determine specifically what you're looking to achieve from your work together. Is there something about your mentor's background or skill set that you want to learn?

Perhaps they're particularly good at navigating the political landscape, or great during times of stress. Or maybe you're looking for better insights into how you're being perceived in the organisation or you want support in expanding your network with a few key introductions.

As with all relationships, you'll be more successful if you are both clear in your expectations for your work together. Have an open conversation about expectations upfront to determine if you're aligned.

2. Be Truly Open to Feedback

If you're going to ask for feedback and advice, be sure you're listening. You don't have to agree or act on it, but be sure to be open and say thank you.

Nothing will turn off your new mentor more than a defensive argument about why their perception isn't accurate.

3. Offer to Help

The best mentoring relationships are reciprocal – both people grow in the process. Ask what you can do to be helpful to them – even if it means rolling up your sleeves and pitching in on a project of theirs.

4. Bring Conversation Starters

The first few mentoring sessions can be a bit awkward if you don't know your mentor very well. It can be good to come with a few “starter” questions, such as:

- What are you most excited about in terms of the future of our organisation? Why?
- How can I best prepare to add the most value?
- What are the things that excite and energise you about your work here?
- What are the things that drain or frustrate you the most? What have you done in order to reduce that frustration?

IN SUMMARY

The best mentoring relationships are grounded in deep trust – and that takes time.

Be patient and invest the time it takes to truly get to know and support one another.

Karin Hurt is a keynote speaker, leadership consultant, and MBA professor. She has decades of experience in sales, customer service, and HR which she uses to help clients turn around results through deeper engagement. She knows the stillness of a yogi, the reflection of a marathoner, and the joy of being a mum raising emerging leaders. To engage with Karin, e-mail us at editor@leaderonomics.com

“Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all.” — Aristotle

QUOTES

IF you could sit and chat with any historical figure in the past, who would it be and why? Watch which inspiring leader CEO Roshan Thiran would like to meet in the latest episode of Ask Roshan by going to bit.ly/askroshane7

Online Exclusive

“Never knew how lucky and blessed I was until I met Thila. He grew up in poverty and didn’t have much. Yet, education brought him out of poverty and he is now making a difference as a young educator.”

Writer Prethiba Esvary shares her story of how she met a young Malaysian who made the most of what little he had. Read her inspiring story by going to bit.ly/education123
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www.leaderonomics.com

BY DANIEL GOLEMAN
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I can choose not to notice people. I want to notice them, but I’m easily distracted. I’m busy. All easy excuses for a leader. But, people can’t see your heart when you’re lost in your head. It doesn’t matter if you want to notice people. It only matters that you do notice them.

Distraction blocks interaction

I walk around the office distracted by a million things — what’s next in the pipeline, problems, opportunities, and performance, to name a few. I’m contemplating a coaching client’s concerns or the next presentation. How could I possibly find time for anybody else?

Remember you matter

Remember you matter, it’s easy to forget that people watch leaders. A frown on your face signals problems to the team. You may not mean to be a downer, but a nagging frown drags others down.

It isn’t hard, but it’s important

People talk about simple things like smiling when they describe how leaders might improve their leadership. Send some of that positivity out into the office.

You object that you’re not good at smiling. That’s so sad. Bad is stronger than good. You need at least three smiles to overcome the negative impact of one frown. You’re in the hole, baby. You better get smiling.

3 tips for frowning leaders to get their smile on.

1. Tell yourself you like people. Think of something you like about the person in front of you. If you don’t like people, get out of leadership.
2. Find a positive thing to believe in. What positive thing might you believe about others on the team?
3. Admire a strength. When you walk up to someone, think about something you admire about them. A smile indicates that you notice positive things.

7 small things that make a positive difference.

1. Smile.
2. Show interest: “How are the kids?”
3. Give a pat on the back when it is needed.
4. Bring coffee for the team.
5. Celebrate progress and hard work.
6. Sing happy birthday.
7. Say thank you. (A smile and a little eye contact takes ‘thank you’ to a whole new level.)

What tips might you offer to frowners? What small behaviours have big impact?


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