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MOVING UP TO THE NEXT LEVEL

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GOOD IS NOT GOOD ENOUGH

YOU NEED TO BE GREAT TO STAY AHEAD OF THE PACK

By MARK MOSES
editor@leaderonomics.com

ETTLING for “good enough” when you’re trying to grow a business is just that: settling. Complacent CEOs are setting themselves up to be overtaken by competitors who aren’t settling — competitors who are thinking big.

Want to stay on top of your industry? Better yet, want to leap to the head of the pack? Stop settling for “good enough,” especially in these three key areas:

1. YOUR GOOD STAFF

I’ve been coaching CEOs and entrepreneurs for 10 years, and the number one difference between top companies and everyone else is the quality of the people. Winning CEOs surround themselves with other winners. They stack their C- suites with A performers — no excuses, and no compromises. They don’t hold on to B and C performers, because they don’t want to turn into Bs or Cs themselves. They know all the reasons that bad CEOs stick with middling performers, and they know that all these reasons are junk:

● A well-liked nice guy who’s slipping? Sorry, “nice guy” is not a job description.

● A solid B performer? B performers lead to B companies.

● Worried you might be firing an underperformer who could improve? You haven’t met enough good people to regret firing anyone too soon; I’ve worked with MANY who regret waiting too long to fire that B or C.

● Can’t afford to hire the best person for the job? Crunch the numbers. What would an A talent add to your bottom line? Most likely, you can’t afford NOT to hire that person.

● Long-time colleague who’s been with the company since the beginning? The people who get who you are today can’t always take you where you want to go next. Rich Baoli had to fire an underperforming CFO — his best friend. The high-performing replacement Rich hired helped grow the company to $1 billion in revenue.

2. YOUR GOOD PRACTICES

Are you hitting your sales targets every month, every quarter? Hey, “good” for you. Now aim higher. If you don’t, your competitors will. Try this: imagine it’s three years into the future. You’re on the beach with your C-suite, enjoying a big party, celebrating because your company.

Fill in the blank. What did your team accomplish? What Huge, Outrageous Target (HOT) did you set to take your company to the next level? What best practices did you put into place that broke that goal down into actionable, measurable steps your team took every day, every week, every quarter until you hit that target?

3. YOUR PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

What are the other players in your industry up to? What best practices are driving their businesses?

Are they cooking up a potentially disruptive innovation that could affect you? Are they doing something you could integrate into your own processes, only better? Top firms constantly ask themselves the competitive threat question, and use the answers to lead them from “good” to “great.”

YOUR GOOD PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

Katrina Polame, Palm, Blockbuster Video, MySpace. Once upon a time, they were all good enough. Now, they’re all dead.

Eventually, “good” gets you left behind. If you want to avoid a place on this list, you have to look ahead, not rest on lag indicators like last year’s sales figures, or last quarter’s customer satisfaction surveys. What’s going to sell NEXT year? Is an exciting new product going to make your catalogue obsolete? Are you dedicating resources to develop the next big innovation in-house? Have you checked your pricing and margins lately? Are you using five-star customer service standards to make your sticker prices more attractive? What is the equivalent of a “digital camera” or “home video streaming” in your business; that disruptive new something that’s just around the corner? When that disruption comes, are you positioned to ride the wave, or wipe out? Is there nothing wrong with being “good.” But there’s nothing GREAT about it either. Companies that are happy where they are stay right there until they become irrelevant. So don’t settle for what’s working today. Challenge yourself to make BIG things happen tomorrow.

Taking risks is a necessary part of starting or running a business, and fear is a completely normal thing to deal with. But what if confidence just isn’t there for you? What’s wrong with being “good enough”, especially in these three key areas?

1. STOP BLAMING YOURSELF FOR FEAR

I once interviewed a highly successful entrepreneur who told me: “You must believe in your business 100 percent. If you doubt by even one per cent, you will fail.”

That’s a pretty brutal responsibility with which to saddle yourself. If your business goes down, will it really be because you suffered a momentary twinge of doubt? Of course not.

By MINDA ZETLIN
editor@leaderonomics.com

SELF-HELP authors, life coaches, and executive workshop leaders all share the same goal — to help you be more confident.

But what if confidence just isn’t in you? What if the slightest mishap causes you to quake in your boots? Does that mean you’ll never be a successful entrepreneur? Not at all. While it’s certainly true that projecting extreme confidence will help you sell people on your point of view, your product, or investing in your company, it’s not the only road to success.

Plenty of famously successful entrepreneurs arrived at the top of their professions racked by uncertainty instead of brimming with confidence. So can you. Here’s how:

2. USE FEAR TO YOUR ADVANTAGE

The problem with fear is that it sometimes stops us from taking action, often disguised as a rationalization, such as: “I need to do some more research first,” or “In a few months, the market for this may be better.”

Start by determining that you won’t let fear paralyze you, remembering that making a decision (even the wrong one) is almost always better than making no decision.

But fear can also drive you in the right direction if you let it. Warning that you might not have enough to cover payroll next month can inspire you to make a few more cold calls, even though the very thought of one more rejection fills you with despair. So when you’re feeling fear into motivation, it may not be the most enjoyable path to a successful business, but it will get you there.

confIDENCE IS OVERATED. HERE’S HOW TO BE SUCCESSFUL WITHOUT IT

By Minda Zetlin
editor@leaderonomics.com

Confidence is overrated. Here’s how to be successful without it.

3. ACT ‘AS IF’

Sometimes the best way to deal with having no confidence is to figure out what a confident person would do in that situation. A few years ago, I landed a job that had been a long-time dream of mine. It was definitely a stretch for me, though, and I found myself frozen at my desk, unable to do a single thing or write a single word for fear that I would do it all wrong.

That quickly put me behind schedule for the job’s tight deadlines. However, with no other option, I used this mental hack — I decided I would produce work as if I were confident that it was good enough, but promised myself that once it was done, I didn’t have to turn it in if I judged it to be unworthy, I could delete it and start over.

It worked. I was able to get past my block and produce work quickly. Once it was done, I did indeed turn it in almost every time, and nobody thought it was unprofessional or bad. A similar mental hack might work for you if fear has you stuck in neutral. And once whatever you did works out, you may find your confidence slowly starting to increase.

4. DO YOUR HOMEWORK

If you lack confidence to begin with, don’t make matters worse by being unprepared for the challenges you’ll meet. Spend as much time as you can spare learning everything there is to know about your profession, your industry, and the specific projects or deals you’re working on. The better prepared you are, the less reason you’ll have to fear. And when you’ve learnt as much as you possibly can about the job you have to do, the industry you’re in, and the people you’re working with, that knowledge in itself should give you confidence. Or at least make it unlikely that you’ll be blindsided by something you didn’t think of.

5. PRACTICE

The more often you do things that take you outside your comfort zone, the less restrictive that comfort zone will be. The more time you spend only on tasks that seem easy and unthreatening, the harder it will be to stretch. So think of the things that frighten you as practice. Even if you do them really badly, the fact that you did them all at will make it easier next time. Keep doing them enough, and you may discover you’ve grown some confidence after all.

Minda Zetlin is a business technology writer and speaker, co-author of The Geek Gap, and former president of the American Society of Journalists and Authors. To get in touch with Minda, e-mail editor@leaderonomics.com
KEEPING YOUR WORKERS ENGAGED

IF THEY SEEM COMPLACENT, LOOK IN THE MIRROR

By ROB WYSE
editor@leaderonomics.com

A few years ago, I worked with a fast-growth business-to-business technology company. It was exciting. It was sold. Excitement ended.

Before that, I worked with a fast-growth company in clean energy. It was exciting. It was sold. Excitement ended.


In the maze of large companies we often find disengaged, or complacent workers. They punch in and punch out. When they punch out, they check out.

I have observed that, during the fast-growth phase, employees are engaged. Their jobs are critical to success. Each has a purpose.

An entrepreneur—with a vision to solve problems—who drives business efficiency and/or makes life better, usually ignites the culture of a smaller company. That passion and focus drives others to achieve the mission and be engaged in their work.

But, for many companies, there is a transition from exciting to boring when a company is sold.

It is summed up in Parkinson's Law: "that work expands to fill the time available for its completion." As companies grow, and work gets divided and specialised, Parkinson’s Law can seep into an organisation.

The worker that had 20 tasks to complete in a day, now has five. Five tasks fill a whole day. And often, the employee does not know if or how those tasks are connected to the overall company goals.

Workers become complacent. In fact, bored.

But, if an employee is complacent, is it because of the employee, or the manager? Should the manager question him or herself before confronting the employee?

According to Ken Siegel, chief executive officer of The Impact Group, a Los Angeles-based group of psychologists who consult worldwide to management, "if your employees seem complacent, look in the mirror."

According to Siegel, a manager must first ask him or herself how they are contributing to the problem of worker complacency. Or, what is that manager doing which encourages employees to "just get by."

Does the executive reward employees for complacency? The reward can be as simple as letting complacency continue unabated. Or, is the manager seeking to claim the glory?

Letting complacency continue can be as simple as the manager avoiding the issue, avoiding conflict, which is actually avoiding facing his or her own shortcomings.

The deeper question that Siegel brings up is: "What is your personal risk for the manager to end worker complacency?"

"Siegel said, "What's usually at risk is the manager's perception by others in the organisation. If they step out too much, they risk being perceived as a self-promoter, or self-serving."

"There are usually risks associated with how others define us—which is a very immature level of personal development."

"Siegel said that top leaders are not defined by outside perceptions, but rather what is inside them. "The best managers have an internal conviction and belief in what they are doing and trying to create."

"That translates into creating teams that are aspirational task and goal-focused. And, those managers celebrate the goals with the team. It creates employee engagement and sense of purpose."

"Complacency is the hidden organisational disease—it is hard to pinpoint. It is not about what people do, but what they don't do."

I have worked with both large and small organisations. Smaller companies need to take chances to grow. Larger companies need to protect their turf.

While these two statements are blatantly obvious, the shift from small to large is a change in mindset. In a small company, mistakes and taking chances are encouraged.

In large companies, perfection and defending sales or market perception is the goal. Large companies can create a culture of diminishing returns in the search for perfection.

In large corporations—good is not good enough. As a result, large organisations find themselves checking and rechecking work products with teams of people. It leads to group decisions, group writing and groupthink. Group mentality drives mediocrity and complacency. It trickles to employees.

Rather than grow their career, employees work to protect their jobs. So, how do companies keep employees on task and engaged? An answer is to think and operate like a company small enough to motivate the individual worker.

I read a recent article in Inc. Magazine entitled "8 Things Exceptional Bosses Constantly Tell Their Employees," It is a list that is a license for an employee to take chances and get involved.

It is also a guidepost for a boss to be a supportive guide and cheerleader. The eight things are:

1. "I have total confidence in you."
2. "This is what I want us to accomplish."
3. "What can we do the better next time?"
4. "I want to play to your strengths."
5. "What is your opinion?"
6. "How can I better support you?"
7. "Let me know if you have any questions."
8. "Good work."

Of course, employees can be complacent on their own. Each can check in and out daily—even get all their work completed, yet be disengaged. So how does a manager identify that person?

To better understand this manager's dilemma, I asked Bob Damon, one of the top executive search consultants globally, who today is a partner at Ventura Partners.

Damon noted that a key to a non-complacent employee is one that has direction and goals. Damon references a famous quote from Yogi Berra, the baseball great: "If you don't know where you are going, you'll end up somewhere else."

Damon has observed, through thousands of interviews, that a person with purpose is a person with passion. Damon takes note of the little things like a person's surroundings that can speak volumes about them.

Damon says: "It may sound trivial, but I actually look at a person's workspace or office. Do they have photos of their dog, or favourite vacation spot? Even in today's mobile work environment, it may just be on their computer desktop. Work needs to be a second home for people. They need to love to be there. Then they will perform."

Damon also says that just looking at a person's facial expressions will tell if they are complacent or engaged. Do they look fired up with energy when they talk about work? Are they inviting? Are their eyes sparkling?

"A critical factor in engagement is pride. Pride in work. Pride in surroundings. Pride in self. Any good manager can feel it from their workers," Damon says.

While Damon references Yogi Berra and the need to know one's direction, he notes also that the past can be an indicator of future engagement in work.

To understand if a person is engaged versus complacent, Damon asks job candidates to reflect on their last three to four years of employment and zero in on accomplishments that gave them a great sense of pride.

"History is the platform for future success. An employee needs to either emulate the example of a boss, or use past success as a launch pad for the future. A solid background will drive future success," he says.

So, back to those first companies I referenced earlier in this article. Each was absorbed into larger organisations.

In doing so, they became cash cows inside multinational organisations. The original entrepreneurs exited, and many of the absorbed personnel became complacent cows inside of a cash cow business.

So to engage employees, practice the eight things. Exceptional bosses tell employees.

And remember to think small—or at least act like a small company. Small business thinking can engage employees with big results.

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WAKE UP CALL

What to Do When Your Team Are Checked Out

Influence a strong sense of personal value
How we feel about ourselves as well as how we believe other people feel about us plays a significant role in energising our spirit and influencing our engagement. Most people are more likely to be engaged when they, for example, feel valued, capable and respected. Reward and recognise people for the contribution they make. Even a “thank you” or public recognition of their efforts can make a big difference.

Build strong relationships
Create an environment in which people are expected to nurture healthy relationships that allow your whole team to thrive. With trust and respect for the people they work with, people are more likely to be emotionally invested in your business. Consider carefully the people you invite to join your team and the impact they are likely to have. Take early action to address conflicts that arise and behaviours that adversely impact how people feel about coming to work.

Share an inspiring vision for the future
Build a clear picture of the future in which people can see the role they need to play. Inspire every member of your team to want play their role, by sharing insight into what you are collectively capable of achieving.

Strive to influence a strong sense of belief in the future and people are more likely to be energised by the challenge. In contrast, when people see little hope of success, they are more likely to disengage.

Connect with and get to know people
Talk to the people on your team about how they each feel about their role, your business and the future. Explore with them the extent to which they enjoy their job and the team they are a part of. Don’t underestimate how common it is for people to simply not like what they do.

Manage energy
The strength of your team’s spirit has a profound influence on the level of engagement and ultimately, performance. When energised, people are more likely to choose effective thoughts, emotions and ways of behaving. When drained of energy, however, most people are likely to respond in ways that undermine success.

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Poor performance
When people are failing to deliver up to an acceptable standard – despite having the skills, knowledge and experience needed – ask them if they are enjoying their job. Errors, unfinished projects, mediocre effort, lack of focus, or simply failing to follow through are common performance issues that arise when people ‘check out’.

Sickies
Simply getting out of bed and ready for work can feel like an insurmountable challenge when people lack the motivation to do their jobs. While people of course need to take time off when unwell, take notice when they regularly take unplanned time off. Unplanned time off either side of weekends – especially when deadlines are upcoming or challenges need to be confronted – are telling signs.

Ordinary efforts
A lack of willingness to do more than is required is often reflective of disengagement. People who are fully invested in their role are typically happy to ‘go the extra mile’ and don’t have to be asked. Engaged people are more likely to support their colleagues to reach goals or deadlines. Disengaged people tend to focus on what they need to achieve and avoid participating in the group. They are more likely to keep responsibilities and fail to step forward when the team needs them to.

Lifting engagement takes a deliberate approach focused on each person, and your team as a whole. Critical steps to take include:

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CONTREMPALE for a moment how often you have observed capable people failing to deliver up to a standard reflective of their potential. Have you seen people behaving in ways that clearly undermine their success? The simple truth is that, when people switch off, their potential is wasted. Success is entirely dependent upon both the ability and willingness people have to apply their talents and energy effectively.

Research shows an undeniable link between staff engagement and organisational performance. According to the Corporate Leadership Council, for example, engaged organisations grow profits up to three times faster than their competitors. Disengagement however remains a significant challenge for the majority of organisations.

A Gallup report revealed that Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore have among the highest proportions of “not engaged” employees in the world. In Malaysia, only 13 per cent of employees are “engaged”; 82 per cent are “not engaged”, and eight per cent are “actively disengaged.”

Tackling disengagement begins with recognising the signs early, and taking decisive steps to connect with and influence how people are feeling. Among the most common signs people who are ‘checked out’ are:

1. Poor performance
   When people are failing to deliver up to an acceptable standard – despite having the skills, knowledge and experience needed – ask them if they are enjoying their job. Errors, unfinished projects, mediocre effort, lack of focus, or simply failing to follow through are common performance issues that arise when people ‘check out’.

2. ‘Sickies’
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THE ONLY MANAGEMENT ADVICE YOU NEED

GREAT LEADERS DON’T NEED TO STRUGGLE TO MOTIVATE, INSPIRE, AND LEAD THEIR EMPLOYEES

By JEFF HADEN
editor@leaderonomics.com

I was struggling to engage the audience. Okay, to be honest, I tried not to let it show but I was dying onstage. Maybe I was having an off day. Maybe they were having an off day.

Or maybe the fact that every one of the 100 people in attendance was a CEO, an executive, or the owner of a medium to large business meant that they were way more accustomed to being listened to than they were to listening.

So, I took a different approach, “In one sentence, what is the key to leading people?” I asked.

Throwaway question? Absolutely. I knew no one would answer. That was the point.

They would sit and stare and then I would supply an intentionally against-the-grain answer sure to spark some heat and conversation. (A little contrived, sure, but hey, I was dying.)

So, I asked the question and then paused to read the room. Some people looked down. Some looked away. I paused to read the room. Some people contrived, sure, but hey, I was dying.)

I stared. More heads slowly turned his way. Mine did too, because I was a little surprised and a lot concerned. Shoot, I thought now I’ve stepped in it.

“Can you repeat that?” I said.

Heads turned in his direction. “We think we have all the answers, and maybe we do, but that doesn’t matter. No one cares how much you know until they first know how much you care about them,” he repeated.

I stared. More heads slowly turned in his direction.

He took the silence in the auditorium as disagreement. “No, really,” he said, starting to sound more confident. “Yeah, we’re in charge and yeah, we talk about targets and goals and visions, but our employees don’t care about any of that stuff for very long.

“We can communicate and engage and connect all we want, but no one really listens to us. They just smile and nod and go back to doing their jobs the way they always do.

“Our employees don’t really care about what we want them to do until they know how much we care about them.”

Wait—what?

“You can repeat that?” I said.

“I know,” a man sitting in the back corner said, somewhat hesitantly. A few heads turned in his direction. Mine did too, because I was a little surprised and a lot concerned. Shoot, I thought, now I’ve stepped in it.

He’s about to whip out some book and ghost-writer for innovators author of more than 50 non-fiction books and ghost-writer for innovators.

Jeff Haden is a public speaker and author of more than 50 non-fiction books and ghost-writer for innovators and business leaders. To engage with him, email editor@leaderonomics.com

THE 7 STEP MAP TO MANAGEMENT SUCCESS

By DANIEL GOLEMAN
editor@leaderonomics.com

#1. Make people matter
The heart of making people matter is enjoying them. After that, become a maximiser. Overcome arrogant tendencies to adopt a fixer-focus. Know team members’ strengths, weaknesses, aptitudes and passions. People want to spend time with managers who care about people.

#2. Define success
One of the most neglected questions in management is: “What does success look like?” The second response to the question is more important than the first.

Typically, successes is first defined in terms of results. The second response is behaviours. What behaviours produce desired results?

#3. Establish and clarify goals and milestones
Successful managers define the path to success.

#4. Make excellence a priority
Don’t allow people to perform below their potential. Your team-mates deserve the opportunity to live up to their talent. Excellence includes candid conversations about reaching higher and mutual accountability.

#5. Provide forward-facing feedback with optimism

Powerful feedback is the result of defining success in terms of behaviours.

Define the feedback relationship. Explore at least three topics.

What type of feedback do you desire? How might feedback be given most effectively? How frequently should feedback be given?

Frequent brief feedback is better than infrequent long. Twice a month is a starting point. Successful performance conversations happen more than once a year.

#6. Advance the careers of others
People love to be around managers who create opportunities for others. How can you help others get to where they want to go?

#7. Get off your high horse
Make expectations apply as much to you as others. Don’t simply point the way. Become a “with” manager.

What aspects of the manager’s success are most useful? What might you add to the seven-step plan to management success?

Daniel Goleman is co-director of the Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence in organisations at Rutgers University, co-author of Primal Leadership: Leading with Emotional Intelligence, and author of The Brain and Emotional Intelligence: New Insights and Leadership: Selected Writings. His latest book is: A Force For Good: The Dalai Lama’s Vision for Our World. To connect with him, write to editor@leaderonomics.com

LEADERSHIP IS INFLUENCE
NOTHING MORE, NOTHING LESS

― John C. Maxwell

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HRDF CLAIMABLE
DROPPING OUT AT THE MIDDLE MILE

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE COMPANIES THAT FAILED TO MAKE IT PAST THEIR INITIAL BOOM

One of the most common and perhaps most devastating causes of start-up failure is making sure that people don’t really need your product. Equipped with awesome ideas and a passionate team, founders can often be overconfident in how well their company can overcome the industry. In India, a company was aimed at optimising the hiring process. Selecting a suitable person for a job is difficult and inefficient. HR officers must sift through piles of resumes to find the right candidate. Talented leaders would notice that the market share would go down with an efficient sales and marketing team, putting both their product in a highly visible manner. Uber’s more aggressive push for wider brand awareness meant that more potential customers became acquainted with the company. They expanded their services a a more rapid pace, enabling customers from all over the world to hail a ride. Having more features than Uber proved that their announcement would match an aptly-expressed passion and qualification with suitable job opportunities. The brilliant move would target the recruitment market worth around US$1 billion. As Ian later found into his business, he plans for scaling a major realisation when he discovered that the market was more complex than it seemed. He found that he had to scale product by targeting the recruitment of junior and mid-level employees. These problems were coupled with the complexity of identifying desirable traits across hundreds of industries, from IT to banking. Clients were better-served by somebody who offered services to particular industries. Combined, these difficulties enabled the whole package. Only a small pool of potential customers were targeted in their presence.

The company was left with the choice of either shutting down or completely overhauling the business. It shut down in 2011. Ten years after returning, its seed funding was used. It is not great to fail – at whatever stage. It is great to learn and from failure and, if you continue to scale up and go global, you can ultimately succeed. The feeling of achievement can often be elusive. Many companies that didn’t make it past this crucial stage of business growth. The feeling of achieving anything can often be elusive. Many companies that didn’t make it past this crucial stage of business growth.

One man’s trash is another man’s treasure. It’s not great to fail – at whatever stage. It is great to learn and from failure. Your start-up; or when you forecast that your product would fail. The feeling of achievement can often be elusive. Many companies that didn’t make it past this crucial stage of business growth.

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Some companies didn’t make the cut. Research at McKinsey (McKinsey), the company that made Blackberry low cost in the ars of innovation, began with a simple but powerful idea that ever many customers in the beginning. The technology they developed enabled vehicles to log data on their own. Companies that didn’t make the cut.

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LEADERSHIP ENDURANCE
WHAT YOU CAN DO TO BUILD THAT MUSCLE

By SASHE KANAPATHI
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I started thinking about leadership endurance recently after reading an article about how humans are built for endurance. There’s a whole theory of evolution that studies our running endurance as, apparently, our original natural advantage over other animals was our endurance.

We may not have been the fastest or strongest animals around, but we had more endurance than most, because we sweat and can regulate body temperature better. So our endurance played a large part in our evolution.

It got me thinking and I realised that we don’t commonly talk about endurance as a trait to describe leaders.

We do talk about how failures build character and how going through tough times is necessary. We’ve also heard that success is a marathon and not a sprint.

While for others, those small victories and letting it sink in will propel you to go further. It also takes incredible self-awareness and experience to know what works for you and what doesn’t.

1 HAVE A CLEAR GOAL
Be clear about why we are in the journey in the first place. Knowing the why of what you are doing, much like what Simon Sinek preaches, helps to keep us going. You must have that vision in your mind at all times, and it must be crystal clear.

For that to be true, that vision must be aligned with who you are. Knowing yourself and knowing the why or the vision really will help you persist, because it gives you deep-rooted belief.

2 HAVE A CLEAR PLAN
As much as the big picture is important, so is each step that you take. You see, endurance is always tested when unexpected things happen. You can’t avoid unexpected things, but you can minimise them through planning and mitigation.

Endurance is not just about leaders willing themselves through difficulties; it is also about wise leaders charting a course that is most likely to succeed.

Think of an Everest expedition, which is a simulation that we do at Leaderonomics. We look at climbing the summit of Everest as requiring endurance, but imagine the planning that goes behind it to even give yourself the chance of success.

The marathon runner Juma Ikanga once said this after winning a New York marathon. “The will to win is nothing without the will to prepare”. So, it’s not only how you are planning to go through the journey, but it’s also the practice and preparation that you do to face your journey.

3 BE REALISTIC ABOUT OBSTACLES
You will inevitably get into trouble if you think you have everything planned and know exactly how things are going to turn out. We live in a VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous) world, and that’s just not going to happen.

People often lose their way when expectations differ wildly from reality. However, if you go in expecting some hurdle, then trouble won’t surprise you. If you expect a smooth sailing ride, then even the smallest hurdle will feel like a mountain.

It doesn’t mean you can predict all obstacles that come your way, but expecting trouble may actually help keep us calm when trouble really does happen. At least we can be calm enough to remember our vision, or to relook at our plans.

Case study: Ben Saunders and his Antarctic expedition
On a TED talk, Ben Saunders shared how he and a friend finished the most ambitious expedition ever – they walked across Antarctica to the South Pole and back. It was almost 3,000km.

They planned that trip to the very detail, and it took a lot of endurance. It was over 100 days of dragging heavy sleds across ice. They were outdoors the whole time, mostly blinded by whiteouts and gruelling conditions.

I was personally trying to understand what it takes to mentally keep going in such situations. It’s a good case study about knowing yourself, having an audacious goal that drives you, and having the right plan.

There was one surprising lesson that I learnt from Saunders. Personally, I think that celebrating your small victories occasionally helps to maintain your endurance level. Or what people would say, ‘to stop and smell the roses’.

In that journey that Saunders and his friend took, when they got to the South Pole (60 days in, after walking 900 miles) where there was a scientific research station, all they did was take a picture, turn right back around and keep walking.

They didn’t even go in or have a meal; absolutely nothing!

That drove home the point that we started with – you need to know yourself. Saunders was more worried that if he went inside the station and took a break, he may not get up to continue his expedition. So he decided to keep his eyes on the prize and just keep going.

Now that may work for some people. If you know that “slowing down” to appreciate the progress may be detrimental, don’t do it.

While for others, those small victories and letting it sink in will propel you to go further. It also takes incredible self-awareness and experience to know what works for you and what doesn’t.

4 HAVING THE RIGHT SUPPORT SYSTEM
This may mean different things to different people. The gist is that you must know what kind of support you will need to be successful.

Is it a mentor or a coach? Is it a proven method for you to overcome stress? Is it having the right team with the right skills around you?

No one achieves anything in this world on his/her own; everyone was supported in his/her journey. That applied to Saunders in his expedition to the South Pole, and even Apple co-founder Steve Jobs too.

They each had the right team around them to help them to be successful. That also means that we should ask for help, and it’s not something to be ashamed of.

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER
There are a lot of great stories out there like Saunders’.

And for each one, you will see the common thread – having a clear goal, having a plan, being realistic and having the right support.

Leadership endurance is not necessarily something we are born with, but it can be learnt. It’s similar to physical endurance.

What about mental endurance?
You should also train it just like you’re training other muscles. Of course, the gym to train these mental muscles is called life.

Let me leave you with this one last thought.

Great leaders can not only endure tough times, they also help others endure and persist to reach their goals.

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Sashe is the director of corporate solutions in Leaderonomics. Interested to know what this Everest expedition simulation is all about? Engage with the Leaderonomics team and see how we can help you! Write to info@leaderonomics.com to find out more.

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recent international study surveyed more than 500 business leaders and asked them what sets great employees apart. The researchers wanted to know why some people are more successful than others at work, and the answers were surprising; leaders chose “personality” as the leading reason. Notably, 78% of leaders said personality sets great employees apart, more than cultural fit (53%) and even an employee’s skills (39%). “We should take care not to make the intellect our God; it has, of course, powerful muscles, but no personality.” – Albert Einstein

The problem is, when leaders say “personality” they don’t understand what they’re referring to. Personality consists of a stable set of preferences and tendencies through which we approach the world.

Being introverted or extroverted is an example of an important personality trait.

Personality traits form at an early age and are fixed by early adulthood. Many important things about you change over the course of your lifetime, but your personality isn’t one of them.

Personality is distinct from intelligence (IQ). The two don’t occur together in any meaningful way.

Personality is also distinct from emotional intelligence (EQ) and this is where the study, and most leaders for that matter, have misinterpreted the term.

The qualities that leaders in the study called personality were actually emotional intelligence skills. And unlike your personality, which is set in stone, you can change and improve your EQ.

Exceptional employees don’t possess God-given personality traits; they rely on simple, everyday EQ skills that anyone can incorporate into their repertoire.

Leaders don’t need to go searching for these skills either (though it doesn’t hurt when you find them); their duty is to help everyone on their team harness these skills to become exceptional.

Just consider some of the EQ-skills that leaders and managers commonly mislabel as personality characteristics.

These are the skills that set exceptional employees apart.

1. THEY’RE WILLING TO DELAY GRATIFICATION.

One thing an exceptional employee never says is, “That’s not in my job description.” Exceptional employees work outside the boundaries of job descriptions.

They’re neither intimidated nor entitled; instead of expecting recognition or compensation to come first, they forge ahead in their work, confident that they’ll be rewarded later but unconcerned if they’re not.

2. THEY CAN TOLERATE CONFLICT.

While exceptional employees don’t seek conflict, they don’t run away from it either. They’re able to maintain their composure while presenting their positions calmly and logically. They’re able to withstand personal attacks in pursuit of the greater goal and never use that tactic themselves.

3. THEY FOCUS.

Student pilots are often told, “When things start going wrong, don’t forget to fly the plane.”

Plane crashes have resulted from pilots concentrating so hard on identifying the problem that they flew the plane into the ground. Eastern Airlines Flight 401 is just one example – the flight crew was so concerned about the landing gear being down that they didn’t realise they were losing altitude until it was too late, despite alarms going off in the cockpit. Exceptional employees understand the principle of “just fly the plane.” They don’t get distracted by cranky customers, interoffice squabbles, or the switch to a different brand of coffee. They can differentiate between real problems and background noise; therefore, they stay focused on what matters.

4. THEY’RE JUDICIOUSLY COURAGEOUS.

Exceptional employees are willing to speak up when others are not, whether it’s to ask a difficult (or “embarrassingly” simple) question or to challenge an executive decision. However, that’s balanced with common sense and timing. They think before they speak and wisely choose the best time and place to do so.

5. THEY’RE IN CONTROL OF THEIR EGOS.

Exceptional employees have egos. While that’s part of what drives them, they never give their egos more weight than what is deserved.

They’re willing to admit when they’re wrong and willing to do things someone else’s way, whether it’s because the other way is better or it’s important to maintain team harmony.

6. THEY’RE NEVER SATISFIED.

Exceptional employees have unparalleled convictions that things can always be better – and they’re right.

No one is ever done growing, and there is no such thing as “good enough” when it comes to personal improvement. No matter how well things are going, exceptional employees are driven to improve, without forgetting to give themselves a healthy pat on the back.

7. THEY RECOGNISE WHEN THINGS ARE BROKEN AND FIX THEM.

Whether it’s a sticky desk drawer or an inefficient, wasteful process affecting the cash flow of the entire department, exceptional employees don’t walk past problems.

“Oh, it’s been that way forever” simply isn’t in their vocabulary. They see problems as issues to be fixed immediately, it’s that simple.
www.leaderonomics.com | Saturday 2 September 2017

HOW YOU PRESENT CAN IMPACT STAFF BUY-IN

BE HONEST
It’s important to not try and hide or cover up negative information or numbers. Nothing turns your team off more than when you lie about your financial situation. You need to treat your team as equals. Provide your employees with confidence going forward. Be future focused and take ownership of the problem.

Pick the steps you’re implementing to turn things around to minimise loss, and how your team can help with this too.

You need to be open and honest about where you are at right now, and what is involved in the journey to get where you are going – together leave them inspired, not deflated like it is their fault.

Bad slides and presentations are used like a security blanket to hide things under. So start with small changes to your content and attitude, and stop hiding and hoping for the best. Your team will respect you for that.

Emma Bannister is the founder and CEO of Presentation Studio, APAC’s largest presentation communication agency. For help with your presentations, check out the VisualStory Workshop, run in partnership with global leaders Duarte across Asia Pacific. To connect with her, email editor@leaderonomics.com

BE ILLUSIONARY
Powerful presentations are our most critical tools in an organisation today. We use them to build buy-in with our team members, to communicate our big ideas and connect with employees to inspire them into action.

Yet, the majority of the time, our presentations are bland and boring, and the only impact they have is to get staff running for the doors (if they haven’t already fallen asleep in their seats).

Our important and urgent messages are hidden in badly designed slides, complex paragraphs of information, and screens of bullet points that have no clear purpose or call to action.

While you may not be able to magically transform a poor presentation into a powerful one overnight, to truly educate or inspire your team to leap from their seats with glee (not to flee), you need to start with:

1. PICK ONE KEY MESSAGE

When you present, pick one clear message to structure your presentation around, and then repeat that message throughout to make sure the message sticks. It is that one idea, purpose or point that is the glue that holds everything else together.

Once there is a clear bumper sticker message then it’s easy to figure out what the key take-home message is for the audience and what is it they should do as a result.

Anything else in the presentation that does not align to this message should be deleted, stripped out and banished. What gets left out of a presentation is more important than what goes in.

MAKE IT EMOTIONAL

I know, I know – in business we’ve traditionally been taught to do the opposite; to just present the facts. But these days, the best presenters are those who can use a combination of facts and emotion to explain a future place that everyone in the organisation wants to work towards.

Use images that match your words and make your team feel an emotion, whether that’s excited, happy, angry or sad. I’ve seen clients use video in place of static images to make their message more memorable.

Remember, people buy from people they like. We buy based on how we feel about something – or someone.

It’s your passion and authenticity that will help you to bond with your team, so they feel like you’re all in this together, instead of you just barking out orders of what they need to do. That emotional pull is what will impact your team’s decision to ‘buy in’ to what you are saying.

While you may not be able to magically transform a poor presentation into a powerful one overnight, to truly educate or inspire your team to leap from their seats.

Growing up, Roshan Thiran (Leaderonomics CEO) learnt some valuable lessons from his coach Mokhtar Dahari, one of the greatest footballers in Malaysia’s history. Find out what he learnt in the latest episode of Ask Roshan by heading to bit.ly/AskRoshanEp8

This Leadership Guide Is Powered By

FOR other great leadership insights, including those by John Maxwell, visit www.leaderonomics.com. If you missed any of our past issues, go to www.leaderonomics.com/publications and download for FREE!
TOP 10 TRAITS OF LIKEABLE INFLUENCERS

1. **THEY HAVE AN OPTIMISTIC MENTAL ATTITUDE**
   Likeable individuals maintain a positive mindset that is infectious. This establishes greater levels of morale among their circle of influence.

2. **THEY TAKE POSITIVE LESSONS FROM FAILURE**
   Likeable influencers seek out positive lessons from failure. They are more likely to express gratitude for having gained wisdom from these unpleasant experiences.

3. **THEY ARE INQUISTIVE**
   These individuals tend to ask questions, as it reinforces their interest in what you say. It also demonstrates that they care enough to find out and listen to your perspective.

4. **THEY ALWAYS SPEAK IN A FRIENDLY TONE**
   Whether they are speaking to an individual or a group, likeable influencers tend to speak deliberately and convincingly.

5. **THEY ALWAYS MAINTAIN THEIR COMPOSITE**
   Likeable individuals can maintain their poise always to avoid unnecessary overreactions or heated confrontations. They don’t get frustrated over minor hiccups easily.

6. **THEY ACCEPT CHANGE WITH OPEN MINDS**
   Likeable influencers don’t avoid people with differing opinions from theirs. Instead, they retain an open-minded attitude that is receptive to difference and possible change.

7. **THEY CONTROL THEIR NEGATIVE THOUGHTS**
   Likeable individuals have a sense of self-discipline which enables them to avoid sharing negative thoughts with just about anyone.

8. **THEY DON’T SEEK ATTENTION**
   These individuals are not attention-seekers. In fact, they are more likely to avoid attracting attention unless it is for a selfless cause.

9. **THEY PRAISE OTHERS GENUINELY**
   Likeable influencers deliver praise whenever it is deserved, without being excessive or giving the impression of not being genuine.

10. **THEY TRUST YOU ENOUGH TO GIVE THEM HONEST FEEDBACK**
    These likeable people are aware of their behaviours, and the way they are perceived by others. However, they are also entirely honest with their circle of influence to give them feedback on their flaws and potential areas of improvement.

TRUST IS THE GLUE OF LIFE.
It is the foundational principle that holds all relationships.

– Stephen Covey

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