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# MAKING A DIFFERENCE, ONE YOUTH AT A TIME

## LESSONS LEARNT FROM LEADERONOMICS' M.A.D. YOUTH LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

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Two weeks ago, Leaderonomics, together with HELP International school, ran a M.A.D. (Making A Difference) Youth Leadership Summit where over 500 youths from across Malaysia gathered together to hear from different industry leaders.

The young participants were then given an opportunity to apply what they had learnt in a choice of three different subjects – poverty, inequality, or the environment. They will now plan out their projects and pitch these ideas to an esteemed panel of judges.

The chosen projects and teams will be sponsored with the funds they need to carry out the initiative. Here are some takeaways from the event:

### THE FIRST STEP – DOING SOMETHING

Just talking about wanting to make a difference is one thing, but putting words into action is the real first step.

“Everyone goes through a different journey to become a leader. Anyone can comment but a leader actually does something about it”, said Dr. Goh Chee Leong, vice president and dean of the Faculty of Behavioral Sciences at HELP University in his opening speech.

Leadership is also influence. “You’re able to change the direction of your life. It’s about how you use that influence to reach others,” said Joseph Lalonde, youth leadership leader.

However, leadership is clearly not an easy journey as seen in Sarah Yap Khim Wen’s life. Before winning gold at the SEA Games for individual taekwondo, and a silver medal for mixed pair in taekwondo, Sarah dealt with many struggles, failure and wanting to give up, lessons which she shared at the summit.

Taekwondo, she said, gave her a sense of achievement, however it was a long and difficult process before she saw any glimmer of hope in reaching her goals. She admitted that she quit for a month. However, during that month she had one question constantly running through her head: ‘What if?’

“I didn’t want to live with that kind of regret for the rest of my life. I picked myself up and tried again – it took me five years until it finally paid off. One lesson I learnt was to not let fear overtake my passion. It becomes a barrier for you to achieve what you want in life.”

No matter your background or upbringing, it is never too late to make a change. That was evident in the life of Chiau Haw Choon, group managing director of Chin Hin Group. Chiau started off in his early days meddling in gangs but eventually found his purpose in life. His advice?

1. Seek your purpose.
2. Set goals to align with your purpose.

“You must motivate yourself before motivating others. It starts with belief, and it starts with yourself,” said Syahrudin Samsudin, chief executive officer of Touch ‘n Go at the event.



Pic by Jesslyn Lai/LEADERONOMICS

### THE IMPORTANCE OF HARD WORK

“What percentage of leaders are born or made?” Roshan Thiran, chief executive officer of Leaderonomics, asked the youth. Hands went up across the hall as the youth shouted their guesses.

Roshan shared research conducted by a scientist who measured ‘geniuses and non-geniuses’ for 35 years. He discovered that for ‘non-geniuses’, 95% of leadership skills are learnt and 5% are genetics. As for ‘geniuses’ – 85% of leadership skills are learnt and 15% are genetics. Becoming a ‘genius’, therefore, is only ever 10% genetically-influenced.

He shared his story of a time when he was 12 years old and didn’t make the cut into the school’s football team. He then decided to practice *like crazy* until he was finally accepted into the team. He was excited to find out that Mokhtar Dahari – arguably Malaysia’s most celebrated player had become their coach.

To his dismay, he learnt that Mokhtar was an extremely tough coach on them. “When you came late, he will make you run 50 laps. I was very frustrated but I told myself to just ‘tahan’ and persevere.”

“Finally it came to the season’s first game and I discovered that I was not chosen to be on the main team. I was set as a substitute and, despite all my practicing and training, I was brought on for only the last five minutes. I became very angry with Mokhtar.”

After the last game of the football season, Mokhtar came and told all of us that he was very sick and had to go overseas for some treatment. After sending all the players off, he called Roshan over and asked him why he was always so angry the past few games.

“I unleashed all my anger and frustration from not having had the

chance to play football and how he was too tough on me. Mokhtar was a little surprised and taken aback. He then asked me: ‘Do you think I am talented?’

“I said: ‘You’re Mokhtar Dahari, the best player in the country. Of course you are.’”

He replied with an answer and a lesson I have never forgotten until today: ‘Roshan, I’m not the most talented but I am the best. Talent is a waste of time. Talent doesn’t make you the best.’

“Hard work and effort do. I push you because, when you put in effort, you can achieve success. Anyone can have talent. But hard work and determination is what helps you achieve success even when you don’t feel you are talented.”

The biggest lesson Roshan learnt that day was that talent is meaningless. “If you don’t get what you want, work hard to get it.”

### LEARNING FROM MISTAKES

When it comes to achieving success, there are bound to be blunders made in the process. Ho Ming Han, YouTube video producer and director of The Ming Thing, shared his early days of being unsure of what he wanted to do.

Being brought up in an Asian family living under his parents’ roof, he negotiated with his mother to give him a one year deadline – he would try making videos and, if that didn’t work out, he would pursue a masters in psychology.

He started off with no equipment but the camera on his laptop. Today, Ming Han and his brother Ming Yue now have over 400,000 subscribers on their YouTube channel (The Ming Thing) and are making a living out of a career that seemed almost non-existent in Malaysia at that time.

“Now is the time to make mistakes,” he shared.

“You’re not responsible for a crying

baby, etc. Rather than sitting and trying to think of the right way, just go and do it. Go and do all the wrong ways. Because if you fail, you will learn. And you can learn it quickly.”

### DISCUSS YOUR IDEAS WITH OTHERS

Having all the knowledge and passion to make a difference is great but to act on it are what Redza Shahid, co-founder of Grub Cycle and Kim Lim, co-founder of The Picha Project did.

Kim, along with her two friends, Suzanne Ling and Swee Lin, saw a need to help refugees make a living in Malaysia and started The Picha Project, a social enterprise which enables refugee families to cook meals and cater for organisations and events.

“The idea came only when we started discussing it with others,” says Kim.

Redza and the team (Asyraf Sofian, Hawanisa Roslan and Charan) also started a social enterprise, called Grub Cycle. Noticing how much food is wasted daily, they decided to make surplus food accessible to buy at bargained prices and use part of their proceeds to subsidise the cost of basic food necessities for marginalised communities.

“See if the idea is workable. Call friends, put it on social media, and experiment with the idea. If you can collaborate with someone then do so,” Redza advised the youth.

“Ideas come and innovation happens when you discuss with others. Ideas also have to start with small actions. Because if you don’t start somewhere, you won’t see the possibilities,” added Kim.

Yayasan Hasanah and Iskandar Investment Bhd. are sponsoring the funding for the chosen teams to conduct their M.A.D. projects.

Leaderonomics offers courses that help you balance work, life and home matters while raising children with the right values. Our workshops are designed for busy parents in their quest to create a happy home. It provides newer perspectives to parenting and re-emphasises the true meaning of value-based parenting. To find out more about this programme and other interesting courses, e-mail training@leaderonomics.com.

Calling all youths (aged 13 to 19) who would like to Make A Difference and pitch an idea for their dream project! Go to [tinyurl.com/madyouthsummit](http://tinyurl.com/madyouthsummit), hit the Resources tab and download the proposal template. After completing the template, email it over to [mad@leaderonomics.com](mailto:mad@leaderonomics.com) and you will be assigned a mentor to help you draft your pitch for an incredible RM10,000 prize. Go for it!

■ Tamara is a creative writer and assistant editor with the Leaderonomics media team. She is a curious creature who thrives on thought-provoking conversations over cups of tea. When she is not writing, she is either styling bridal hair, traveling, or hiking up a mountain in search of a new waterfall to explore.