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9 BECOMING THE ‘LEARNER LEADER’
TO BEND OR NOT TO BEND?

WHY LESS RIGID WORK ARRANGEMENTS ARE BETTER FOR EVERYONE

BY PREMA JAYABALAN
editor@leaderonomics.com

A BOUT one week into my new role, I was faced with a small dilemma. It was my daughter’s first birthday celebration in her kindergarten. I had to drop her birthday cake at school and be there for a quick celebration before heading for work. It would be just a 15-minute stopover, but that meant I would be an hour late to work. At the time, I was reporting directly to the head of the organisation. I had only met him once or twice as he was frequently abroad on work trips. I didn’t know what to do. Should I skip her first birthday celebration at school or should I request permission to drop by her school for a while? Well, motherly love got the better of me and I pursued the latter. Since my boss was travelling at that time, I texted him requesting his permission to call him an hour later and apologised for the inconvenience caused. This is the reply I got: “Sure. No worries and never be sorry for doing the right thing for your child.” I was pleasantly surprised by the quick response (I thought my request may be declined). And, it was the last sentence that struck a chord with me. What made this experience more memorable was that when I tested him two days later on work updates, he responded to them and ended his message with an enquiry on how my daughter’s celebration went.

This may not seem like a big deal for some, but for me and I’m sure many other employees out there, this was a gesture that displayed great care for the well-being of his employees.

YOU HAVE TO BEND A LITTLE

In today’s working environment, flexibility at work has become the norm. Working offline and flexi work hours have become a need for employees. Most organisations advocate this but how many are practising it?

As someone who works in the media industry and with friends from the multinational companies, non-governmental organisations and government sectors, I can safely say that yes, most organisations practise this but there is a large number of organisations that do not practise it in reality.

According to Sara Sutton Fell, chief executive officer (CEO) of FlexJobs and founder of 1 Million for Work Flexibility, employees and management believe flexible work only benefits their employees; they don’t believe it benefits the broader organisation. Flexibility at work results in less stress and improved work-life balance which includes less negative spill-over from work to home and vice versa for an employee. However, employers gain their fair share of benefits from workplace flexibility too.

A United States June 2014 report called Work-Life Balance and the Economics of Workplace Flexibility produced by the Council of Economic Advisers says businesses benefit by enhancing recruitment, improving worker performance and increasing job satisfaction.

Another interesting point to note is that employees who can practise work flexibility are more likely to feel that they can continue doing the same job into their 60s.

Is this not an influential solution to prevent attrition and increase retention? A flexible workplace creates a positive impact for employers and here’s why you need to get on-board:

INCREASE IN EMPLOYEE RETENTION

Gone are the days when employees stayed in their jobs regardless of the situation. Today’s Millennials and some Gen-Xers want satisfaction, empowerment and trust in the workplace. They would not hesitate to move on if they feel that their contribution is not valued. They also want balance in life and do not want to be confined to stringent work hours. According to Fell’s article on Entrepreneur.com, 82% of professionals said they would be more loyal to their employers if they had flexible work options, while 39% have turned down a job promotion, rejected a job offer, or have resigned due to a lack of flexible work options.

EMPLOYING THE BEST TALENT

If your business is competing globally, it’s crucial for you to be equipped with the best talent. Practising flexibility at work enables you to hire these talents regardless of where they are located in the world. Gone are the days when generalists sufficed for roles. Today, hiring managers are looking for industry-specific experience, hence finding the perfect candidate is next to impossible. The modern, digitised communications today enable you to communicate with anyone, anywhere, and at any time.

It has resulted in many organisations being able to employ talents with the right skillsets from across the world to create a strong team that is able to deliver even while working remotely.

To read the rest of Prema’s story, head on over to bit.ly/whyflexiblework

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HIGH-QUALITY LEARNING IN ORGANISATIONS

DUE DILIGENCE ON THE PART OF HR LEADERS

By ROSHAN THIRAN

I

was once told by a university profes-
sor that, within a few years of gradu-
ating, students’ qualifications are effectively obsolete. I thought that
was quite a bold statement. In just a few years? Does the world
change so quickly? It would seem so.

I’m sure the professor didn’t mean to
suggest that formal education is ren-
dered pointless after a period of time pos-
terior graduation. Education is arguably the noblest pur-
suit, it’s what gives us understanding and helps us to con-
tinue society.

Whether it takes place in a prestigious
institution or is picked up in bits and piec-es along the way, we see receive some lifelong benefits from it.

THE PARADOX OF TRADITIONAL LEARNING

If I’m quick to defend traditional edu-
cation, it’s because I believe that we can be too quick to discard the old whenever the new comes along.

When it comes to learning, our rich
history of pedagogy has served so many
really well, and continues to do so.

I doubt the professor meant to say that
traditional learning is completely without value.

Rather, I believe he meant that, due
to the speed of changes in the VUCA
(volatile, uncertain, complex and
ambiguous) world and the increasing
interests that come with those chang-es, lifelong learning is now a necessity
rather than a luxury if we want to main-
tain our edge.

This applies to both ourselves and organisations as a whole. Learning can never be outsourced, but the methods of learning can.

GENERATIONS AGO

As recently as the 1980s, it was enough
to leave school, gain employment, and
be set for life.

If you managed to obtain a degree or diploma, you were all the more
be set for life.

As HR leaders out there, we need to ask ourselves a serious question: What are we doing to truly help our people grow and develop?

With organisations facing leadership pipeline crises, and with many employees disengaged from their roles, it’s an urgent question and one that requires honest introspection and proactive measures.

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ENCOURAGE ENGAGING LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Learning should be relevant, valu-
able, practical and engaging – instead of
whiteboards and stale coffee, employees
(and their organisations) fare much bet-
er from programmes that offer business
simulations through game-based learn-
ing, for example.

In other words, learning is most effec-
tive when it provides an active learn-by-
doing approach within situations that
people are likely to encounter.

By offering effective learning that
provides simulated challenges, people’s
minds are stretched and critical thinking
and collaboration are enhanced, because
there’s a practical problem to be solved in
real time.

When given a set of hypotheticals, the
brain much prefers to go for a nap, con-
serving mental energy for when it actu-
ally needs to function optimally.

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

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As a company a learning organisa-
tion, or one that simply brings people in
and lets them get on with their 9-to-5
jobs?

As HR leaders, we have a duty to help
others develop (if I hear one more person
say that HR is solely about “hiring, firing
and holidays”, I might burst).

We owe it to those people who do
their best to help our organisations suc-
cceed, to make sure that we are not only
giving them the space and time to learn, but also ensuring the learning experience
is relevant, engaging and serves a purpose to the highest standard.

Employees, they tell me, see these as
nothing more than a chance to escape
the office for a while, only to wish they
were back in the office once they are met
with a sub-par learning experience.

I recall one human resources (HR)
professional who was asked to attend a
customer service training day.

A professional who had been in HR
for over 10 years, they found that they
were “being taught how to speak on
the phone to people, and engage with oth-
ers” – a wasted working day that could
have been better put to use in the office
(not my words).

It’s no wonder business leaders and
employees alike view learning experi-
ences with dread.

No one likes to passively sit through
a one-way communication, where an
“expert” tells a room full of people what
they probably already know. It wastes
everybody’s time.

FACE THE ‘CRAZY’

UNKNOWNs

Of course, every generation has its
skeptics. When the printing press first
allowed books to be mass-produced,
many people said that they would ruin
people’s ability to recall information –
why bother to memorise anything when
young people can simply look it up in a
book? It sounds crazy, doesn’t it?

Every age has similar concerns and,
100 years from now, people probably
will look back and say: “You know, in the early
21st century, some people thought the Internet was a dangerous and distracting
tool – crazy, huh?”

While valid concerns should be
addressed (I’m sure the concerns over
books were just as valid at that time), we
are nevertheless presented with an
ultimatum as advances arise: we can either resist and try to cling on to tradi-
tional methods, or we can embrace the
positive side of new technology and take
advantage of the many opportunities it
affords us.

After all, technology in itself is neither
inherently good nor bad – it’s how we use
it that determines positive or negative outcomes.

ELIMINATE ‘TIME-WASTING’ LEARNING

When it comes to learning, while
I strongly respect traditional methods,
I genuinely wonder if classroom-style
training has had its day, certainly
within the context of business training.

As businesses are presented with
increasing challenges such as to stave
off competitors and retain their top
talents, there’s a growing need for organisa-
tions to find new ways to survive and thrive,
and digital learning is a key resource that
can help companies succeed in an ever-
competitive market.

I’ve spoken to so many business lead-
ers who have lamented the ‘waste of
work’ they’ve felt traditional workshops
and seminars to be.

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WHO WILL DOMINATE THE FUTURE OF WORK? SPECIALISTS OR GENERALISTS?

OR MAYBE THERE’S A MIDDLE WAY – BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE LETTER ‘T’

BY JACOB MORGAN
editor@leaderonomics.com

It’s a common debate that is gaining more traction as we move towards the future of work: should you be a generalist or a specialist? There are pros and cons to both answers, but the best solution might be right in the middle.

THE GENERALIST

Generalists can typically do many different things, such as a handyman who can fix a number of problems around the house like plumbing and woodworking, or a marketer who can offer everything from social media to broad advertising campaigns.

The benefit of this approach is that a generalist has a variety of skills, which can be incredibly useful in the freelancing economy. With a broader skillset, you can be easier to market yourself.

If something needs to be done, a generalist can typically do it fairly well and can be called upon in a number of situations. However, there is also the notion of “jack of all trades, master of none,” meaning that a generalist can provide basic competency on a number of tasks but not actually perform a single task with great expertise.

By spreading your skills over a wider area, it takes away the possibility to be really good at a single thing.

THE SPECIALIST

On the flip side are specialists who focus on one thing and do it incredibly well. These are people like electricians or coders who only work in a single programme. The benefit of a specialist is that it becomes your brand – people know they can come to you to solve a problem related to your specialty.

The downside is that if the project includes anything beyond your specialty, you’ll likely need to pass it on to someone else. Being a specialist can open some doors, but it can also be viewed as limiting because the focus is on one single area.

T-SHAPED EMPLOYEE

Who will rule the future of work – generalists or specialists? The best approach is actually a combination of both, or a T-shaped employee skill set. The top line of the T is a general skill set that gives an employee a broad range of understanding and capabilities, such as general marketing skills. This is where generalist tendencies come in.

However, underneath that top line is the vertical line of the T that allows the employee to go deep into a specific expertise, such as content media or marketing analytics, and be a specialist in that area.

With this combination of skills, you can market yourself as someone who understands and can perform a variety of marketing tasks but also can expertly perform tasks in a more defined area.

You get the best of both worlds by being a generalist and a specialist, which makes it easier to market yourself. This is becoming increasingly important as each employee can view themselves as being an entrepreneur of their own career and look for ways to stand out and build a personal brand.

LEARNING TO UNLEARN AND RELARN

In the future of work, the most important skill is to be able to learn how to learn. The amount of knowledge available and the skills needed to be successful in the workplace are constantly changing.

The best employees know how to find the information they need and continually be honing their skills so they’re always up to date. They’re able to expertly perform tasks in a more defined area. They’re also able to learn how to learn.

The future of work will bring a number of changes for employees, but with a strategic T-shaped skill set, you will be prepared to be successful no matter what the future brings.

Jacob is one of the world’s leading futurists who advises business leaders and organisations around the world. To send in your thoughts about T-shaped employees, email us at editor@leaderonomics.com

By Prethiba Esvary
prethiba.esvary@leaderonomics.com

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DEAR HR, ARE YOU READY TO JUMP?

KEY TRAITS HR PROFESSIONALS NEED TO HAVE TO SURVIVE

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SURVIVING CANCER
11 LIFE LESSONS FROM THE LIFETIME EXPERIENCE

By CHARLES DE BRABANT
editor@leaderonomics.com

I have cancer in both lungs. The American Cancer Society (ACS) estimated that there were approximately 900,000 new cancer cases in the United States in 2018. I was diagnosed with breast cancer and ovarian cancer in 2017. I am not the only one who has faced this challenge. Cancer is a cruel disease that affects people of all ages and backgrounds. It can be a life-altering experience, and it can be a difficult journey. However, I have learned that there is a way to live life with cancer. The following are 11 lessons that I have learned throughout my cancer journey.

1. FIND YOUR OWN COPING MECHANISMS

Cancer treatment is a war that takes place within your body and mind where the enemy and the savagery are the same – chemotherapy. To cope, you need to find your own means to keep going. While it is important to listen to others, especially other cancer survivors, doctors, nurses and acquaintances, their physical and emotional support will make all the difference.

2. FIND YOUR OWN MINDSET

I was often pushed to be the perpetual optimist, to look at how others had suffered more than me. It never actually worked for me. Dwelling in negativity and slipping into depression are certainly not the desired mindset either. Fortunately, I was able to deal with it by having an optimistically realistic approach to my fate. With cancer, I ended up many times on the wrong side of the statistics. So had I been too optimistic at every step, I believe that it would have left me shattered. By being realistic, it allowed me to cope with the negatives and fight on. It taught me how to be more reflective when some piece of good news came my way. It's always great to have won small battles, but don't get too confident until the big war is won.

3. TRYING TIMES FOR EVERYBODY

Being diagnosed was a moment in life where everything just shifted, not only for me but also for those dearest to me, especially my wife and children. I became totally dependent on them. It required important adjustments for all. After years of being at the peak of health, the sudden change to being at home or the hospital created a sense of helplessness. It was not only tough on me, but it demanded a lot of courage and resilience from Elisabeth and Chiara.

4. BUILD A COMMUNITY OF SUPPORT

I don’t believe anyone can go through this ordeal alone, at least not healthily. So find that community in family, friends, doctors, nurses and acquaintances. Their physical and emotional support will make all the difference.

5. FIND A WAY TO SHARE WHAT IS HAPPENING

It is not enough to have people supporting you; you need an avenue to talk about it. It seems that this comes more easily for women than for men.

6. THE IMPORTANCE OF SECOND (OR SUBSEQUENT) OPINIONS

Getting advice from different people, preferably from different places. This is especially true when critical decisions need to be made. It reassured me to know that all the doctors in Malaysia and Canada whose help we had consulted shared the same diagnosis and treatment protocol.

7. LOVELY THINGS HAPPEN IN TRYING TIMES

Despite the ordeal, I am so thankful for many things. It brought our family closer together.

From the start of my treatment to when I got the green light to live normally again, I wrote a journal of events and feelings that I shared with family and friends. I can only tell you with hindsight that it was an essential way for me to cope and better understand what was happening to me.

But with the recurrence of my cancer, she realised the importance of family, and that brought us much closer before she furthered her studies.

I realised how unsupportive I was when Elizabeth had cancer 15 years ago. I finally apologised to her as it was something that had lingered in her heart for years.

We spent Christmas as it was intended to be spent – a special moment of love and care, instead of fighting and waiting only to open presents.

The experience also brought me closer to many friends, families and acquaintances. The messages of support were heartwarming and profoundly impactful to my wellbeing.

8. EXERCISE

You will lose weight and energy. In many cases, you will experience hair loss, although that quickly becomes secondary if you are a man. In between chemotherapy sessions, you will stay healthy and exercise. It is essential to speed up your recovery, especially for your mental wellbeing.

Small steps will do and, as my doctor told me, your body will tell you fast when it cannot go on anymore. I can say that by working at it, I was just about back to normal after two and a half months. And in three to four months, I should be fitter and healthier than ever.

9. BEWARE OF THE FINANCIAL CONSEQUENCES

In some cases, with less brutal treatment and more understanding bosses, you may be able to manage your state of mind better.

But in other cases, you may have to stop for a few months, facing you to leave your current employment.

You may also want to completely reassess your life and take a more fulfilling and healthier path.

You probably need 6–12 months of financial security to make it through. Thanks to Elisabeth, we were fortunate enough to have something sold, and that gave us some security.

One wonderful story of support in financially trying times was told by former vice president Joe Biden when he received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from former president Barack Obama on Jan 12, 2017. When Beau Biden, Joe’s eldest son, was diagnosed with a brain tumour, Joe was unable to continue working as attorney general of Delaware and, as a result, no longer had enough money to support his family.

Joe was ready to sell his house outside Washington to help his son and told the president about it.

Given what Joe had been through in losing his first wife and young daughter, he had to fend off the accident years before and bringing up the rest of the family in that house, the president told him that he would never allow him to sell it and would give all the money that was necessary to help him and his family through the difficult times that lay ahead.

The experience also brought me closer to many friends, families and acquaintances. The messages of support were heartwarming and profoundly impactful to my wellbeing.

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Every effective leader is also a mentor and a coach who strives to develop the competency level of others. Leadershiponomics has comprehensive coaching and mentoring programmes to help individuals develop relational skills that build a strong mentor-mentee relationship. Through this workshop, participants will learn about the different types of mentoring relationships and set goals to achieve results in and out of the organisation. Participants will also learn about what makes a successful mentor. Email info@leaderonomics.com, and we’ll be in touch with more information.

Check out this video on our Top 5 ways to empower people in the workplace: bit.ly/2U3Moka
THE LIQUID WORKFORCE
IF YOU'RE NOT TAPPING INTO IT, YOU'RE NOT INNOVATING

By DONNA WELLS
donna@leaderonomics.com

ECOLOGIE has an unusual work force. A lot of people ask me how it is possible for startups to remove so quickly what corpo-
rations can’t. So far, I’ve been asked over 15,000+ others, including employees and partners at ECOLOGIE, to name just a few.

ECOLOGIE is a successful serial entrepreneur and an experienced public and private board director. Donna loves to create businesses, and she is an innovation and technology thought leader. She advises and invests in technology companies and is a mentor to many entrepreneurs.

Donna believes that if something makes you smile, it’s possible to do it in a way that you’re afterwards, you can see the results in your organization. The most successful way to achieve results is to make the technology part of the work. In this way, you can drive your team’s performance and create a sustainable culture.

The future workforce will be more fluid and adaptive. Businesses will need to be able to react quickly to changes and adapt to new technologies. Leaders will need to be able to build a culture that is flexible and robust.

In the future, businesses will not need to hire new talent, as they will have the flexibility to hire and fire as needed. This new model will help businesses to be more efficient and costs-effective.

Leaders will need to learn new skills and adapt to new technologies. They will need to be able to work with different types of people and be able to communicate effectively.

To read the entire series of Business and Technology, visit www.leaderonomics.com.
Happiness is the joy we feel when we’re striving to fulfill our potential and accomplishing something significant.

**1. Why It Isn’t As Simple As ‘Being Happy’**

Happiness is the experience of positive feelings of pleasure combined with deeper feelings of meaning and purpose.

I n December 2013, Gallup researchers stunned the business world with the revelation that just three in 10 workers in the United States (US) are engaged in their jobs and willing to do all they can to help their bosses and organisations succeed.

In the nine months that followed, a hyper-focus on restoring engagement had become a fully-fledged movement in the US, with many companies committing themselves to boosting employee happiness as their chosen remedy.

Like a doctor who had made a dire diagnosis and then wasn’t consulted for proper treatment, Gallup had grown alarmed that the pursuit of happiness had so many leaders embracing a tonic that will not help businesses get better.

In 2014, I sat down with Jim Clifton, Gallup’s chief executive officer (CEO), and asked him to provide his prescription for bringing American workplaces back to full health.

Leveraging insight gained from Gallup’s decade-long global engagement and wellbeing studies, not to mention his own work with hundreds of companies across the world, he offered this often counterintuitive advice:

**1. WE SHOULDN’T BE TRYING TO MAKE WORKERS HAPPY**

“The idea of trying to make people happy at work is terrible,” Clifton told me emphatically.

While advising companies like Zappos, which intentionally fosters positive workplaces, he nevertheless believes a day-to-day focus on the fun aspects of happiness greatly miss the mark.

This is because Gallup’s research shows that how a person feels about the work they do every day has the greatest impact on engagement by far.

“What companies will inevitably find is that the only way to make a person happy is to give them a job that matches well to their strengths, a boss who cares about their development, and a mission that gives them feelings of purpose,” Clifton said.

A belief that something gets better when you come and do your job, that’s as happy as you can be."

Studies in positive psychology help to validate this and show that true contentment is tied to meaning and flourishing.

According to Shawn Achor, author of *The Happiness Advantage: “Happiness is the experience of positive feelings of pleasure combined with deeper feelings of meaning and purpose.”*

**2. FREE LUNCHES DON’T DRIVE ACHIEVEMENT**

“Free lunches and snacks have little direct impact on human performance,” Clifton insists, “and have the real potential of being destructive to achievement.”

On a vacation to Yellowstone National Park, Clifton noticed signs saying; “Do Not Feed The Bears,” almost everywhere he went.

Concerned that all these postings were an indication that bears were mauling campers in unusual numbers, he sought out a park ranger for explanation.

“Those signs aren’t for your protection,” the ranger told him, “they’re there to protect the bears. What most people don’t understand is that when you feed a bear a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, they’ll never dig for roots again.

“Park visitors think all they’re doing is giving the bear a treat, but they end up eating all the great animal’s lives.”

Clifton believes we need similar signs in a lot of American companies.

“Rather than looking at all the ways that actualise people, they’re focused on free food. And that’s not only what people don’t want – it’s what’s going to spoil them.

“The ultimate act in workplace leadership is to human development, not a focus on happiness or entertainment.”

**3. PERKS AREN'T MUCH BETTER AT DRIVING ENGAGEMENT**

It’s perhaps a surprise that Clifton is not a fan of the “Best Places To Work” rankings annually published in Fortune magazine.

“It’s because he believes we too often hear about successes with perks when the spotlight should be placed on the companies who make more meaningful investments in growing their people.

“Many companies like Google offer perks because they create conveniences for employees,” says Clifton.

“But there’s no cause and effect in terms of engagement and high performance. I think perks make a little bit of difference to people, but the benefit is granular compared to a focus on individual expansion.”

Clifton, nevertheless, strongly advocates that organisations provide employees with health care and on-site day care.

“Offering these is the right thing to do; both greatly enhance wellbeing, which is known to have a direct and positive impact on the bottom line.”

**4. ENGAGEMENT IS DRIVEN BY WHAT MANY CEOs STILL BELIEVE ARE SOFT PRACTICES**

“What businesses really want,” says Clifton, “is for employees to bring their initiative, commitment, and productivity to their jobs; but we can’t find any evidence that pay plays much, if any, role in driving this.

“The true connections are what many business leaders instinctively consider soft practices. But it’s almost as if the softer you go, the stronger the signal. The softer you go, the stronger the correlation.”

All of the questions that Gallup asks workers about their engagement, Clifton told me, “are really about a human wanting to develop, maximise their strengths, make a meaningful contribution, and feel valued. And we know that engagement happens automatically when these deeper needs get met.”

But traditional beliefs about how best to motivate human beings continue to be the key reason why 70% of the working population in the US is disengaged.

“The truth is that many CEOs have been repelled by this idea that management must incorporate more heart to be successful,” Clifton says.

“But now, many are saying; “come a little bit closer, my dear.” And this is because CEOs are desperate to win.

“They’re beginning to recognise that an authentically caring culture provides a clear and sustainable competitive advantage.”

**5. SO GOES THE MANAGER, SO GOES ENGAGEMENT**

When I asked Clifton where organisations should start if their objective is to build deep and lasting engagement across their enterprises, he was direct and unambiguous.

“Going forward, we must insist on hiring caring managers. Managers must be driven, love productivity, profitability, and competing,” he added, “but they must also have an inclination to maximise the potential of every person on their team.”

Gallup has discovered that organisations too often make the mistake of promoting people into managerial positions simply because they were most senior, or they’ve previously been star individual performers.

But their research shows that unignorable success comes when companies demonstrate greater discipline—and courage—by selecting people who have the proven motivation of making a difference in the lives of others, not just their own.

“The final question companies should ask each time they’re considering a managerial candidate is this: Do they offer leadership or do they need leadership? It’s a big difference,” Clifton says.
LEARNER LEADERSHIP
FROM GENUINE CURiosity, ASK OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

By GUY PARSONS and ALLAN MILHAM
editor@leaderonomics.com

In today’s work environment, we are being flooded with change and never-ending-to-do lists. It is impossible to know all the answers demanded of us. Yet, we’re finding that leaders who are willing to shift their mindset from a “known” leader to a “learner” leader have much more success in harnessing the collective power of their teams.

By evoking the power of the pause, settling the scene and asking genuine, curious questions, today’s leader can guide their team with a steady hand, while experiencing greater team engagement, better outcomes, and less stress.

THE POWER OF THE PAUSE

The power of the pause works when we are in discussion with other people – in a team meeting, a board meeting, or a one-on-one.

We often engage in fast-paced conversations with team members while also (sometimes simultaneously) trying to manage new information. We may feel compelled to respond immediately to each situation or interruption.

The power of the pause offers a moment to reflect on the particular issue at hand, to listen to your intuition and then respond.

This is a powerful practice given the general cacophony of the workplace, which – more often than not – consists of extroverted workers who tend to talk aloud to gain their own clarity on things. Invoking the pause and gaining your own mental clarity can help you speak with precision and insight.

Many of us enter the workplace with our foot on the accelerator and we don’t relent until we get home. Doing this leads to burnout, leaving us with little energy for our loved ones and the renewal such engagement offers.

The resulting energy drain has a negative impact on our decision-making ability, as well as our ability to bring intuition and reflective thinking into the workplace the next day.

Pausing to reflect also helps leaders create white space during the course of their hectic day. Taking 15-20 minutes to recalculate by closing the door, silencing the phone, and entering a state of mindfulness, allows the leader to ask, “What really needs my attention?”

Successful leaders tend to do this twice daily so that they can be sure to direct their attention and energy where it is needed most. When we are stuck in overdrive, we miss the opportunity to pause and ask the question: “What should I be doing now to get the highest value out of my work?”

Adding time to reflect throughout your day allows you to be more productive and provide greater value.

STAGING YOUR ENVIRONMENT

Once you’ve paused and feel the timing is right, it’s important to think about the environment and context of your meeting. Too often meetings are scheduled in a predetermined set of answers or a narrow goal in mind.

In a corporate setting, we emulate the director of a play and set the stage to create ripe conditions for amazing meetings and for cultivating that learning mindset.

When it comes to the meetings you lead, ask yourself how the environment you choose can help set the right conditions to get the outcome you want. Ask yourself where the meeting will take place and when it will take place.

Will it happen during normal business hours, or during off hours? Maybe it will take place on a Saturday morning, offsite?

Maybe it will take place at a dinner? Or maybe it will be in a typical conference room?

You want a place that will encourage those leader attributes to come alive. If you’re participating in an eight-hour innovation workshop to think about the next year’s products in a meeting room on the building’s windowless, subterranean floor, don’t be surprised when you get stagnation or mere tweaks on last year’s models.

You need to offer people a work environment that is conducive to stimulating creative energy. Doing this shows that you respect and value your team.

Once you’ve paused and set the scene, it’s time to ask the right questions.

WHAT MAKES QUESTIONS GREAT?

There are several key elements to keep in mind when forming open, curious questions. They must be authentic and genuine.

That means the speaker honestly searches for new ideas and doesn’t have a predetermined set of answers or a narrow goal in mind.

The right questions allow people to leave behind some of their own preconceived notions and will encourage them to think in new ways.

To ask questions that challenge assumptions, you have to understand people’s current assumptions and limiting thoughts.

You can begin to discover this propensity by asking questions that allow people to explore and brainstorm at the edges of where they are, and possibly into the future or even off on the horizon.

It is important to focus on the future, rather than on who is to blame. Far too quickly, blame turns to shame, which makes people feel very disempowered rather than part of a solution.

When that negative response is prompted, you push the culture to be closed and defensive. You can avoid that contagion by asking open questions stemming from genuine curiosity.

Some of our favourite examples of completely open-ended questions are:

- “How can we make sure that (problem or issue) won’t happen again?”
- “What needs attention to achieve your desired outcome?”
- “What would have to be true for that to happen?”

The art of asking the great question is a combination of thinking and performing. It’s about first understanding your posture.

Then it’s about forming your question and asking it with the right tone and posture.

The content of the question is the main thing: however, if it’s not delivered in the right way, it won’t work.

Learner leadership allows you to be conscious of the what and how you communicate.

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- Eckhart Tolle

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DON'T BE THAT GUY
6 TRAITS THAT ARE MAKING YOU A BAD EMPLOYEE AND COLLEAGUE

This is one of those situations where perception matters more than reality.

Don't deliberately undershoot your goals; just be realistic about the results you can deliver so that you're certain to create expectations that you will blow out of the water.

1. HAVING AN EMOTIONAL HIJACKING

My company provides 360° feedback and executive coaching, and we come across far too many instances of people throwing things, screaming, making people cry, and other tell-tale signs of an emotional hijacking.

An emotional hijacking demonstrates low emotional intelligence, and it's an easy way to get fired.

As soon as you show that level of insta- bility, people will question whether or not you're trustworthy and capable of keep- ing it together when it counts.

Exploding at anyone, regardless of how much they might 'deserve it', turns a huge amount of negative attention your way.

You'll be labelled as unstable, unapproachable, and intimidating. Controlling your emotions keeps you in the driver's seat.

When you are able to control your emo- tions around someone who wrongs you, they end up looking bad instead of you.

2. BACKSTABBING

There are two. Stabbing your colleagues in the back, intentionally or otherwise, is a huge source of strife in the workplace.

One of the most frequent forms of backstabbing is going over someone's head to solve a problem.

People typically do this in an attempt to avoid conflict, but they end up creating even more conflict as soon as the victim feels the blade.

Anytime you make someone look bad in the eyes of their colleagues, it feels like a stab in the back, regardless of your intentions.

3. SUCKING UP TO YOUR BOSS

Some people suck up to their boss and call it managing up, but that isn't the case at all.

Sucking up has nothing to do with a real relationship built on respect, it is sneaky and underhanded.

Suck-ups try to get ahead by ingratiating the boss's ego instead of earning his or her favour. That doesn't go over well with colleagues who are trying to make it on merit.

Yes, you want to bolster your relation- ship with your boss, but not by under- mining your colleagues. That's the key distinction here.

For a boss-employee relationship to work, it must be based on authenticity. There's no substitute for merit.

4. NEGATIVITY

Sometimes when you're feeling negative and down, your mood can leak out and affect other people, even if you don't intend it to.

You were hired to make your boss's and your team's jobs easier, not harder.

People who spread negativity through their department and complain about the work or other people complicate things for everyone else.

If people always have to tiptoe around you so as not to dislodge that massive chip on your shoulder, they are unlikely to be willing to do it for very long.

5. GOSSIPING

People make themselves look terrible when they get carried away with gossiping about other people.

Wallowing in talk of other people's misdeeds or misfortunes may end up hurting their feelings if the gossip finds its way to them, but gossiping will make you look negative and spiteful every time, guaranteed.

6. BRAGGING

When someone hits a home run and starts gloating as they run the bases, it's safe to assume that they haven't hit very many home runs.

On the other hand, if they hit a home run and simply run the bases, it conveys a business-as-usual mentality, which is far more intimidating to the other team.

Achieving great things without bragging about them demonstrates the same strong mentality — it shows people that succeeding isn't unusual to you.

7. ANNOUNCING THAT YOU HATE YOUR JOB

The last thing anyone wants to hear at work is someone complaining about how much they hate their job. Do their jobs. So labels you as a negative person and brings down the morale of the group.

Bosses are quick to catch on to nay- sayers who drag down morale, and they know that there are always enthusiastic replacements waiting just around the corner.

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

These behaviours may sound extreme and highly inconsiderate, but they have a tendency to sneak up on you. A gentle reminder is a great way to avoid them completely.
GOOD judgement expands the future, but being judgmental:
1. Wrecks relationships.
2. Diminishes talent.
3. Dis-motivates teammates.
4. Dis-engages employees.

The difference between good judgment and being judgmental is assumption.

#1. Judgmental leaders make decisions based on negative assumptions
Suppose John misses a deadline. Judgmental leaders instantly “know” why he missed the deadline. He doesn’t respect others. He’s lazy. He only cares for himself. He can’t manage time.

False assumptions are imagined realities.

#2. Judgmental leaders interact with people based on assumptions, not realities
I treat you with my assumptions about you in mind. Negative assumptions sabotage relationships.

#3. Judgmental leaders hinder the growth potential of everyone they judge
Once you make an assumption, you find evidence to validate it. It’s difficult to bring out the best in someone when you assume the worst about them. Assuming the worst brings out the worst. It’s more difficult to let go of a decision than to make it in the first place.

Confronting judgmentalism:
1. Replace negative assumption with positive regard. Think the best, not the worst, until proven otherwise.
2. Try to prove positive assumptions, rather than validate negative ones.
3. Extend compassion. Judging is merciless. Compassion toward weakness enables people to expand their strength.
4. Respect talent. We’re all great at one or two things and suck at many.
5. Stay curious in the face of skepticism.
6. Commit to maintaining a constructive vs destructive orientation.
7. Embrace a growth mindset.

5 questions for good judgment:
1. What skills, strengths, and talents do this person demonstrate?
2. How might this situation be an opportunity to strengthen relationship?
3. What might you do to add value?
4. What positive intentions might you put into action?
5. What are you learning about the way you interact?

How might leaders overcome tendencies to make quick negative judgments?

“WHAT’S the purpose of having a mentor?” Reporter Tamara Jayne poses this question from a Leaderonomics.com reader. One purpose of mentorship is that both mentor and mentee get to share knowledge and learn from each other. Watch what else Leaderonomics CEO Roshan Thiran has to say by typing out bit.ly/askroshanep4

If you want your business to succeed, there are a bunch of people you should probably avoid hiring for your organisation. Find out about 7 types of people here: bit.ly/avoidhiring

As Albert Einstein said:
Everyone is a genius. But if you judge a fish on its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.
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