RINGING IN A NEW AGE OF CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

4 GETTING THE RIGHT TALENT FOR THE JOB
6 THE VALUE OF PEOPLE IN A TIME OF CHATBOTS
9 HOW TO TAKE SERVICE TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Did you miss our first EXCLUSIVE digital pullout last Saturday? Don’t forget to download our special Chinese New Year edition, only on leaderonomics.com. Go to bit.ly/ldrEmag to get your copy!
The key to overcoming this is to find the right mentor who can help your company avoid some of these pitfalls that you yourself wouldn’t have the foresight to predict.

Another important aspect that businesses need to practise as they transition into their next phase is meeting the evolving needs of the market. If you don’t meet the needs of the group or market you are addressing, you’ll invariably collapse.

When we started our company over a decade ago, the focus was on providing Salesforce CRM (customer relationship management) solutions and at one point we realised that we can’t be a one-trick pony—we had to expand into other areas.

So, we listened to what our clients needed in order to help us navigate into providing other solutions.

But as we grew our offerings, we realised we bit off more than we could chew. One of the failures we had was trying to take on an ERP (enterprise resource planning) solution which manages a company’s business process from start to end. Unfortunately, our skills set wasn’t enough to deploy ERP solutions, so we had to scale back.

However, when we expanded into marketing automation, we were able to do so successfully. We could make this successful transition because of market-ing automation.

This process—when helping to generate better quality leads—was a key thing in the market then. So, yes you need to expand to meet the evolving needs of the market but you’ve got to do that with a good understanding of your strengths and weaknesses.

So how do you keep track of market needs? Most large companies tend to have a stagnant response towards an evolving market and end up losing out. New ideas are born to displace the old and disrupt businesses.

In a nutshell, it is the whole idea of a capitalistic marketplace. To avoid being disrupted out of business, you can do either one of these two things—adapt with the marketplace or acquire businesses that are disrupting you.

So, check your assumptions regularly against the market, with your customers and importantly with your employees as well. Suggest what the company can do differently and how to do it.

Keep pushing for solutions and keep challenging the status quo. Practise an open culture by encouraging your company to do self-criticism every now and then.

If—as an individual—you can’t handle criticism or take feedback that’s harsh, then you’re not going to have a culture that’s adaptive.

One way to go about this in an efficient manner is to conduct an anonymous 360-degree review. This will allow anyone to say anything about your work style and ideas, as well as that of your peers, subordinates or superiors.

Setting the tone

To create a proper structure without killing the enthusiasm and creativity of the company, it is important for business leaders to set the tone of the company culture.

Conscious culture-building is important regardless of your company size because it lets you keep an eye on what your company is about. So, if you want to be innovative, the individual at the top needs to lead innovatively.

Leadership in the age of disruption

Save the date

Stay nimble!

How start-ups can be agile and grow simultaneously

Meeting market needs & finding the right skill set

The requirements when growing a company also differ to an extent for start-ups that provide products versus those that provide services.

For a product company, it’s about always finding a niche that meets a need or solves a problem. A services company on the other hand grows with finding the right type of people. What’s common to both is funding.

One of the main reasons start-ups fail is that you’re entering unchartered territories and once you get there you find that the problem is bigger than anticipated.

The presence & absence of structure

A tech start-up is typically responsive and agile with an “everyone does everything” mentality—this is a great practice when you’re operating on a scale that consists of fewer than 30 people as tasks can be easily coordinated between individuals.

But if the same is practised in an environment with a larger number of employees, this will result in overlapping focus on one task while others get left behind with no one looking into it. People unfairly single out structures and processes but these are necessary as they ensure efficiency when working together.

Even a two-man start-up has a structure to it; you do half, I do half. The key is to remember that processes are a means to an end and that end is meeting the need of the marketplace.

If you’re adapting to changing needs and this requires a change in process—do it! There is nothing sacrosanct about sticking to old processes and claiming that this is how it always has and must be done.

Businesses should not turn processes or structures into rigid elements because it kills enthusiasm and ingenuity within a company.

Verify your assumptions

Some of the mistakes start-ups make as they transition into their next phase is having unfounded enthusiasm. It’s good to be enthusiastic and it’s important that you believe in yourself but not too much as this can be a big problem—in itself.

You’ll meet people who’ll say, “yes, I need this app” but once you’ve created the solution, you might find that no one else needs it or is willing to pay for it.

Mark Thomas

Andrew Thomas has 22 years of experience as an engineer and is an expert in technical solutions, strategy, business processes and operations. He has worked with AT&T, T&L Technologies, and was country manager with Alan Dick & Company (Malaysia) before acquiring it. He is also the co-founder and executive director of Luna Protocols, a cloud solutions provider of technologies such as Salesforce.com and Google.

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Conscious culture-building is important regardless of your company size because it lets you keep an eye on what your company is about. So, if you want to be innovative, the individual at the top needs to lead innovatively.
**‘I DON’T KNOW’**

**3 WORDS THAT CAN SOLVE ALL PROBLEMS**

In taking a different approach to how we take problems on, we give ourselves an advantage by creating a solid foundation upon which a lasting solution can be built.

It’s when we rush to solve major issues that we offer solutions which are built on shaky ground, and that’s when we create the conditions for similar problems to arise in the future.

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

It’s not easy for us humans to say, “I don’t know”—our natural impulse is to express, explain and elaborate on whatever thoughts that first pop into our minds. But what those wise philosophers of ancient Greece knew that most of us miss is that our initial thinking comes to us in its rawest form. In order to get any value from our thinking, we have to cultivate, nurture and refine them through consideration and contemplation. It’s never a great strategy to simply throw our thoughts out there and hope something sticks. Give it a try the next time you’re faced with a dilemma or a challenging obstacle to overcome. Notice if your mind rushes to throw out a hasty idea before you’ve even had time to properly consider what’s in front of you.

View the problem with a beginner’s mind; ask questions, consider the possibilities that arise after some deliberation, and see whether or not there’s a better solution that arises compared to when we rush desperately to try out the first thing that comes to mind.

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By ROSHAN THIRAN

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"I had an hour to solve a problem, I’d spend 55 minutes thinking about the problem and 5 minutes thinking about solutions." —Albert Einstein

THE BANE OF QUICK FIXES

"We always hope for the easy fix: the one simple change that will erase a problem in a stroke. But few things in life work this way." —Atul Gawande

The problem with trying to find the quick fix is that, while this is a fine approach to addressing small issues that arise, when we embrace a one-size-fits-all approach to all challenges, it simply creates more difficulties.

While we can’t afford to be overly think about the best way to solve problems that arise, we tend to go to the other extreme by not giving much thought to difficult issues. Leaders are often keen to express their expertise and knowledge; employees who are eager to impress are quick to offer a range of suggestions; and who choose to stay invisible and remain safe are happy to yield the floor to the former groups. But there’s a missing piece here, and one that’s arguably the most crucial piece of the puzzle.

Whenever a problem arises, we frequently come to it as though we already have the best solution. Rarely do we approach problems with a beginner’s mind—with the fervent curiosity of an imaginative child.

Again, not all problems need such an approach. Sometimes solutions are obvious; however, there are plenty of puzzles in leadership and in business that keep us guessing. Otherwise, there’d be no need for the countless lectures, books and blogs that continue to strive to unpack complex challenges.

THE MAGIC WORDS

“A sum can be put right: but only by going back till you find the error and working it off fresh from that point, never by simply going on.” —C.S. Lewis

In addressing any difficult problem, I believe there are three magical words we can use that will put us in the best starting position to find the best solution. Mathematicians, physicists, biologists and engineers use these words before tackling a problem, but for many of us, we find the words difficult to say. So, what are those three words? I don’t know.

THE ALL-KNOWING MINDSET

Starting from a position of, “I know! I immediately shut off all avenues of examination and exploration. How many of us have heard a tough problem being addressed in this way? (How many of us have been the ones to address problems in this way?)

Usually, it’s from this position—ignore most often by an influential member of the team, or senior manager—that we see group-think setting in. This psychology term describes the desire for conformity within a group, which means that group members will eagerly embrace a suggestion that’s accepted by the majority or put forth by a senior figure without question.

In many cases, it can lead to disastrous results, as John F. Kennedy found out when dealing with a State crisis. (He later learnt from his decision-making mistakes—a progress not all leaders make.)

A BEGINNER’S MIND

Conversely, having a starting position of “I don’t know” opens up a range of possibilities as an effort is made to cover all the angles and perspectives.

Approaching a tough challenge with a beginner’s mind can make all the difference. To take a problem and consider the implications, possible solutions, and their after-effects is more likely to yield an effective solution than to immediately burst like a piñata that spews forth quick-fix solutions.

“I suppose it is tempting, if the only tool you have is a hammer, to treat everything as if it were a nail.” —Abraham H. Maslow

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Roshan Thiran is the CEO of Leaderonomics—a social enterprise working to transform lives through leadership development and nurturing potential. Connect with Roshan on Facebook at bit.ly/LdrRTfb for more insights into business, personal development, and leadership. This article was first posted on LinkedIn.
How to Bring in the Right People

By PREETHA ESBVARY
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Did you know that hiring the right candidate can save businesses a tonne of money? An article by Harvard Business Review revealed that “avoiding a toxic worker [is] worth about $12,500 in turnover costs. Aside from the cost, a bad hire can affect an entire team’s morale, motivation and productivity. So when a hiring manager realises that a candidate isn’t the right fit for the role, they opt to train them with hopes that they will change in time. In our previous article (dated Feb 10, 2018), we spoke about having the right blend of personality and work experience to decide what training programmes your employees need. However, Accendo’s chief executive officer Sharma KSK Lachu said, “No matter how good your training is, if you bring garbage in, nothing will change.”

This is why some companies spend a lot of time and effort to select the right talent to start with.

Why did HR Hire the wrong person?

Reactive rather than proactive

Sometimes when hiring managers are pressured by time, they resort to hiring a candidate who almost meets the criteria they’re looking for. “In recruitment, we call it ‘bum on the seats’,” Sharma said.

Insecurity

At times, hiring managers may feel threatened by overqualified or highly capable candidates due to an inferior complex and ego. “You need to hire people better than you. Not necessarily, if you have too many gendals, you won’t be able to fight the war,” Sharma advised.

Incorrect measures

Hiring managers may sometimes make the mistake of hiring candidates based on how they compare against each other. Sharma said: “It’s more of, ‘Oh I think candidate A is better than candidate B.’ Nobody really thinks whether the candidate fits the job criteria in the first place.”

So, how does a hiring manager find the right talent?

Build a solid talent attraction platform

A press release published by Hays Malaysia last year revealed that “… personal networks offer a way to hear about a job before it’s advertised as well as to learn about the work culture of an employer from someone with inside knowledge.”

This is why hiring managers need to go out, network and build a portfolio of talents, Sharma advised. Such a portfolio can be built on a talent attraction platform. The one by Accendo, for instance, uses the same concept as LinkedIn, but serves the regional HR technology solutions company with two decades of industry know-how. They are “firm believers of re-engineering people management as well as work. Their award-winning tools and services enable their customers to adopt effectively and complement the fast-changing ASEAN market.

Hard Talk

The critically acclaimed 1987 movie The Untouchables depicted how FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) agent Eliot Ness finally brought down Al Capone, a notorious gangster, during the United States’ Prohibition era from 1920 to 1933 when law enforcers were unable to defeat the criminal organisation. To beat the system where law enforcers were considered to be the ‘tools’ of a criminal organisation, Ness had to break the rules. By his own admission, he was a “coachable candidate.” This person realised that he is not the part of the problem. Yet, when it comes to taking the step to change, he bails out. “That’s just the way I am” is his excuse. He doesn’t think it is his responsibility to change, to intervene in whatever nature has bestowed upon him (although he really dyes his hair, tattoos his arm and gets Botax). He is not afraid to be labelled recalcitrant or its equivalent. Instead, he secretly feels that the label is some sort of a heroic badge. After all, heroes in movies always save the world despite their quirks and weaknesses. And most of them didn’t have to change for a person this characteristic goes a little further than a No. 1 person, but still falls below the mark of a coachable candidate. This person

THE UNTOUCHABLES

A Breed to Beware

By V S RAVI

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1. He doesn’t think he has a problem.

Remember the classic story of the horse that refused to drink despite

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Based on that data, the system automatically pulls the resume of selected candidates and initiates the recruitment process, he shared.

In conclusion

Jim Collins, the author of Good to Great once said this: “People are not your most important asset. The right people are.”

If you’re keen on improving your talent attraction and acquisition methods, Accendo will be able to point you in the right direction.

Unable to be self-aware

Insecurity

Reactive rather than proactive

Incorrect measures

Build a solid talent attraction platform

In conclusion

How to bring in the right people

By PREETHA ESBVARY
preetha.esb@leaderonomics.com

DID you know that hiring the right candidate can save businesses a tonne of money? An article by Harvard Business Review revealed that “avoiding a toxic worker [is] worth about $12,500 in turnover costs. Aside from the cost, a bad hire can affect an entire team’s morale, motivation and productivity. So when a hiring manager realises that a candidate isn’t the right fit for the role, they opt to train them with hopes that they will change in time. In our previous article (dated Feb 10, 2018), we spoke about having the right blend of personality and work experience to decide what training programmes your employees need. However, Accendo’s chief executive officer Sharma KSK Lachu said, “No matter how good your training is, if you bring garbage in, nothing will change.”

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BUSINESS PROCESSES 101
HOW SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT IS HELPING MALAYSIA COMPETE INTERNATIONALLY

By MATT NAYLOR
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It's time to start at the very beginning (according to The Sound of Music, it's a very good place to start) and ask ourselves — what is supply chain management (SCM)? It's a term which we come across often in today's corporate environment, particularly as automation and big data begin to take hold.

Supply chain management is about much more than just understanding how certain business processes are run. It's getting people to understand the consequences of every action and every business decision, not just of the company they work for, but its rippling effects to customers, their customers' customers, or even to the environment in general," says Isaam Najib Rafee, managing director of Excel Minds Consultancy which has recently launched a specialist course on the subject.

"People often say that, for a business to be more successful, we need to increase sales. "They don't realise that greater profits could just as easily be achieved by reducing our costs and managing our assets better, especially during an economic downturn. "That is why SCM is so important, as important even as sales. In essence, SCM is about streamlining every facet of the business to increase revenue, reduce costs and speed up processes, in a responsible and ethical way.

YOUR BREAD AND BUTTER
Understanding the concept of supply and demand, managing stock takes, and inventories, being able to draft legally-binding contracts, managing relationships with suppliers, managing finance, being environment-friendly and socially ethical — all fall under the umbrella of SCM. Having a leader and a workforce wellversed in the subject is going to get any business ahead. From the top down, it should be the ABC of your business to ensure that people are doing their part to drive profits and build a competitive advantage.

"It is not that the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Industry 4.0) has suddenly led to the creation of SCM, but it has certainly shone a spotlight on it, which is why the right training for your staff is essential.

"Everyone talks about automation these days and how Industry 4.0 is changing the way businesses operate, but human competency is still key to maximising a business potential," says Isaam.

"Let's say you're hoping to do a transaction buying raw materials for your manufacturing plant. "Automation will help to file the newly acquired raw materials and monitor your stocks and finances, but there still needs to be that initial human-to-human interaction at the beginning to complete the transaction.

"Can't we see a time in the future when humans will be completely replaced by robots and client management is one of the key areas to be automated?"

"Indeed, equipping the human workforce to be Industry 4.0-ready has become the focal point of training providers all over the world and, Excel Minds is no different.

But could instilling better business processes also help on a wider scale?

NATIONAL IMPACT
There is nothing surprising in pointing out that having highly-skilled people working in a company with smooth internal processes will see effective results. But Isaam believes that a strong foundation of SCM training will help at a national level as well.

"A few years ago, we were looking at government strategies in terms of talent acceleration and identified that SCM was a core subject we wanted to focus on," he says.

"As I worked through that and began to notice that Malaysia was becoming a logistics hub and the government's drive to get Malaysia involved in e-commerce, it became more obvious that SCM was crucial to our national future."

"Malaysia needs to attract foreign investment to propel it to the next level; if we are to achieve our goal to be a developed nation by 2020, we need as many multinational companies having bases here as possible.

"In order to do that, we need to have skilled people on the ground who can work for those companies and drive businesses forward.

"That is why achieving national goals is something every single person can be responsible for.

The quality of training in Malaysia is certainly up to par and now, more and more organisations are beginning to take note and sending their high-potential and most influential employees to learn the SCM skills that will help them thrive.

EMPowering the NEXT GENERATION
The Excel Minds programme has already begun equipping the Malaysian workforce with SCM knowledge.

"The programme covers every aspect of SCM in the modern world. The initiative is supported locally by the Human Resources Development Fund (HRDF) and the Malaysian Employers Federation (MEF). "SCM is a very simple concept, but it can also get very technical. This is where a lot of employees within the business fail to grasp the magnitude of its implementation," says Excel Minds professional trainer Jaafar Abu.

"Those who have been through the programme suddenly have a huge advantage in the workplace and their employers will notice that effect immediately. "Their understanding of the whole business operation and the various processes that go into it is the only way that they become a truly valuable employee."

Jaafar is one of the trainers teaching the IT&C SCM programme, with colleague Affan Nawi sharing the sentiment of how important it is in today's marketplace.

"No company globally can be successful without implementing a world-class SCM programme," says Affan.

"SCM is pivotal in leapfrogging Malaysia’s logistics to become world-class. Faster, cost effective and better requirements are the ingredients to successful supply chain. "The IT&C SCM programme is a key element to enhance the capabilities on supply chain and make Malaysia a competitive nation.”

Those in the programme come from a wide range of industries, seniority levels, job scopes and age groups. Yet, each is driven by the same goal of maximising their own personal input for the company's better output.

"The trainers for each topic are real practitioners and experts in this field who are open to share their experiences so we can relate them back to our own companies," says Sharifah Jamilah Syed Hussain, senior manager for procurement and contracts at Kemanam Bitumen Company.

"We always anticipate learning each topic as it comes while consistently being reminded and tested on all that has come before it. "This is an excellent learning technique to ensure we remember the important facts and apply them to enhance our performance and increase our competitive edge."

"This programme allows me to work on an existing supply chain issue with the client and provide a best-practice recommendation," says Nurul Nadia from Shimadzu Manufacturing Asia. "I was able to merge the tools I learnt in the classroom along with my experience to provide the client with a meaningful solution.

IN CONCLUSION
As the world becomes more connected globally, understanding SCM and having an international perspective becomes more crucial in today's world of big data and automation. This is especially so for the small and medium-sized enterprises that account for more than 98% of companies operating in Malaysia, plus the government's 2020 goals to increase exports and gross domestic product.

It is therefore heartening to see that there are courses being provided and steps being taken to ensure that Malaysia remains competitive on a global scale in this sector. Excel Minds and their newest training programme are ensuring that businesses of all sizes have the right people and processes in place to thrive internationally.

After all, SCM is a simple concept and can be executed easily with the right training and guidance. Hence, it should not be overlooked by any company in today's day and age.
Want to get a real taste of a trip to Asia? Here are some insights into the customer service trends that are shaping the future of hospitality and tourism.

**EMPATHY MAKES HUMANS, HUMAN**

Customer service, at its core, is an emotional experience. A recent study found that 86% of consumers are likely to use a brand again if their issue was resolved during the interaction. But what if companies could take this a step further and truly understand their customers? The answer lies in empathy.

Empathy involves putting yourself in someone else’s shoes. It’s about understanding their perspective, feelings, and needs. When you provide empathetic customer service, you show your clients that you care about them and their experience. This can lead to increased customer satisfaction, loyalty, and a positive word-of-mouth reputation.

But empathy is not just a feel-good concept. It’s a business strategy that can drive real results. According to a study by Harvard Business Review, companies that prioritize empathy in their customer service achieve a 26% higher customer retention rate.

**AI AND CUSTOMER SERVICE**

**ARE WE MISSING THE BIGGER PICTURE?**

As we see more companies embracing AI and chatbots, one question remains: are we missing the bigger picture? AI is just one tool in the customer service toolkit, but it’s not the only one. Human interaction is still essential, and AI should complement human agents, not replace them.

When it comes to customer service, the most human parts of the experience—empathy, personalization, and problem-solving—cannot be replicated by machines. AI can help automate routine tasks, but it cannot replace the emotional connection that human agents provide.

**CUSTOMER SERVICE NEEDS A MAKEOVER**

Just as companies need to embrace digital channels, customer service needs a makeover. The Makeover report by Salesforce found that 92% of customers prefer to interact with a live human agent. If companies don’t adapt, they risk losing customers to competitors that prioritize human interaction.

To make the most of AI, companies need to ensure that it complements human agents, not replaces them. This means using AI to free up human agents to handle more complex and emotional issues, while AI handles the routine tasks.

**IN SUMMARY**

In conclusion, as we see more tech companies transform their operations and customer service, it’s important to remember that human interaction is still essential. AI and chatbots can help automate routine tasks, but they cannot replace the emotional connection that human agents provide. The key is to find the right balance between human and AI, and to use both tools to deliver the best possible experience for customers.
THE ART OF STORYTELLING

By LOUISA DEVADASON
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“A good story makes you feel something and is universal. They want to grasp your values and your commitment to excellence; be inspired and intrigued. Storytelling is the most powerful way to convey these ideas.”—Mark Truby, Vice President of Communications, Ford Motor Company.

In a world that is becoming increasingly automated, it is easy to forget the human side of business in favour of efficiency and convenience. However, the best companies in the world thrive through the stories they share with us. Storytelling is an art we all grow up with – one that we engage with and enjoy in some shape or form.

For businesses, these stories are their identity – their purpose for existence and how they ascribe meaning to what they do. Good business storytellers draw us in the way they convey the why and the how of what they do.

This is of course, no simple feat as entrepreneurial storytelling is both an art – and a precise science. So, how can brands and businesses tell their story in a robust and effective way?

To gain further insights into how it’s done, Leaderonomics spoke to three leaders of Malaysian tech-based firms who are part of the Global Acceleration and Innovation Network (GAIN) programme developed by the Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC).

CHIA YONG WEI
MICROLINK SOLUTIONS

A mere two years after becoming part of the Omesi Group, Chia was made Group Chief Executive Officer of Microlink, a subsidiary of Omesi, in April 2016.

Additionally, he is also Group Chief Technology Officer of Omesi Group and Chief Operating Officer of Omesi Innovation Lab – a division that develops technology and applications.

As the former Head of Innovation, Commercial & Technology (ICT) and Regional Head of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) at AirAsia, Chia gained a lot of wisdom from another great story teller – AirAsia’s founder and Group CEO – Tony Fernandes. Chia highlighted two main lessons that he is always mindful of:

1. “I came from a structured, presentation sort of background from my 11 years at Accenture.”

   “With Tony, you realise you are working with a sharp, entrepreneur with strong business acumen so you don’t want to beat around the bush. I learnt quickly to deliver my message succinctly and notably in three minutes. It’s not an elevator pitch but it needs to be short and strong.

   “Another thing I learnt from him was how to get the attention of others. Tony often starts conversations strong with an idea or a question that draws people in and he is very connected to his own story of where he came from and that’s always been remarkable to me.”

   Chia – a charismatic and energetic person himself – also added that these are qualities of great value to him and one that he continues to empower and cultivate in himself.

   “There are many leaders out there, (and) for one want to be charismatic. Not just to grab attention but to convey my message as effectively as possible. It’s important because that’s how we can engage others in the story we are telling.”

Microlink is focused on helping their clients understand Big Data and Industry 4.0. Chia shared that as a tech firm in a very technologically advanced era – human interaction skills like storytelling are more important than ever.

He adds: “It is important to be able to provide context, or a contrast so that others can grasp these concepts in a meaningful way. Storytelling brings the humanness to all this – through analogies and painting a picture.”

Be factual, be concise and be careful that your stories are always truthful).

In short, Chia says authenticity, charisma and being concise are key components for effective storytelling.

DATUK AZRIN BIN MOHAMMAD NOOR, SEDANIA INNOVATOR

Azrin, the founder and managing director of Sedania Innovator Bhd – a technology empowerment company – is no stranger to storytelling having written two books and published four.

The first book became an MPH number 1 bestseller, “Non-Conforming”. He shared some of what he learnt through his writing process saying: “An entrepreneur in their lowest state is a salesman. If you are not a salesman, you are not an entrepreneur – you are just making products.

Mastering storytelling, fine tuning it as an art – is at the heart of great entrepreneurship. I break my formula into two parts: the content and the audience. Failing to understand both means you cannot reach out. With ‘Non-Conforming’, I knew I wanted to reach out to the youth so I knew my audience – I now have to shape my content in a way that resonates with this group.”

Azrin who was recently awarded CEO Of The Year – at the Malaysian Top Achiever Awards 2017 – has a great heart for reaching Malaysian youth and offering new ideas to get them thinking differently, and innovatively to thrive in these times.

It is a value that underpins both his goals and Sedania’s as they reach out and empower.

He has this piece of advice for up-and-coming firms who want to hone the art of storytelling:

“First of all, be aware of the importance of being a thinker, of being empathetic, intuitive – and actively cultivate this in yourself.

If you are not there yet, you need to find someone who is and bring them on board and you must learn from them. Every team benefits from a member who has strong storytelling abilities and a strong mind but, we have to be open and welcome them on board.”

VISHEN LAKHIANI, MINDVALLEY

Lakhiani stresses the importance of telling your start-up story in an honest way that inspires and draws people in. His greatest advice? People need to know your ‘why’.

“If you are heading a start-up, people do not care what you do. They care why you do it.”

“Simon Sinek in his famous TEDtalk, ‘Start With Why’ essentially said that people ultimately care about the why of a company or a person rather than what their product is.

“People simply connect more with the why than they do the what but, here is the thing: start-up founders I know who are building great companies – they are not just doing it to sell out.

They are driven to solve a problem or address a gap in society. It’s essential to talk about their why – the core of what is driving them.”

Lakhiani stated that he was empowered to start MindValley to share the benefits and personal growth he gained from meditation, goal-setting and other tools his father shared with him from a young age. And that is his why that he never loses sight of.

He added that start-ups must transcend storytelling and share their truth, their passion and their driver in order to truly reach people and thrive.

“I wanted to get the things that I was learning out there. To be shared with others. When I explain MindValley, I talk about what inspired me to do it – the why.”
WHEN Starbucks instructs its baristas to start asking customers for their names – that they could be written on the cups – it sounded like a peculiar policy. Nevertheless, it’s a trend that’s stuck. In the United Kingdom at least, we prefer our shopping trips to come with minimal fuss, and interacting with strangers with whom we don’t know how your name feels, at best, rather suspect. But with its innovative policy, Starbucks tapped into a fundamental element of human psychology.

To quickly establish rapport, communication experts and coaches will tell you to use a person’s name often (without over-doing it) in conversation. Why? Because we all like the sound of our own name. Even when we’re zoned out during a conversation, whenever we hear our name, we snap back to attention.

We are more inclined to feel positively towards people (and brands) who use our name, especially when they use it in conjunction with say, a much-needed caffeine fix on a Monday morning.

THE FEEL GOOD FACTOR

Starbucks’ method of personalising people’s coffee cups – as providing a relaxed environment, adds to the overall customer experience. People don’t necessarily buy Starbucks coffee because they’ve carefully concluded it’s the best coffee – they buy into the brand primarily because Starbucks creates an experience designed to make the customer feel good in general about the half-hour they spend here and in the store.

Another example of creating exceptional experience is Apple’s retail stores – the most profitable stores in the world. Store design and the products within – for which people queue up for hours upon release – are surely part of the success story. But Apple is a company that’s obsessed with creating memorable experiences for its customers.

Apple’s credo mentions nothing about coffee, but rather, it centres on people, “We are at our best when we deliver stuff. Rather, it centres on people, upon release – are surely part of the successful experience is Apple’s retail stores – the most profitable stores in the world. Store design and the products within – for which people queue up for hours upon release – are surely part of the success story. But Apple is a company that’s obsessed with creating memorable experiences for its customers.

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ChangeQuest is a dynamic simulation that helps participants bridge the gap between the theory and application of change management. It provides the participants with strategic and tactical insight necessary for introducing an impactful transformational change to an organisation over a certain period of time. To experience this simulation, write to us at info@leaderonomics.com.

Do you have story to share about how learning has helped your career? Drop us a note at editor@leaderonomics.com

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STAY AGILE & EQUIPPED IN A VUCA WORLD

To remain relevant in today’s ever-changing world, continuous learning is inevitable. Find out how to leverage learning as a strategic weapon for your organisation to achieve its business objectives.

LEARNING AS A STRATEGIC WEAPON

O NCE seemingly uninterruped and tranquil, the business environment today has become increasingly turbulent and uncertain. Major disruptions to technology, competitiveness, political landscape and marketplace manipulation are sweeping across the global business landscape. In the midst of these unpredictable pressures, many organisations have constructed an overarching comprising a collective capacity to learn – not just as individuals – but as an entire organisation.

WHY LEARN?

Current organisations are investing on big scales to reform learning initiatives to suit a modern learner. While these agile, on-the-go learning needs of a modern learner are forcing organisations to reconfigure their learning strategy, not all of them are prepared to jump on the bandwagon.

Another factor is whether or not our present working population is ready to embrace these contemporary learning methodologies. Having said that, organisations are experiencing a new wave of catalytic power behind the initiatives which transform the way we look at revolutionising how we, as big or small enterprises, utilise learning as a strategic weapon.

In an ever-changing VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous) world, intellectual capital, expertise and competencies are quickly becoming redundant. Frequent structural changes to address market requirements are also becoming common. Learning helps an organisation stay agile and ahead of the curve.

THE REASON TO SET YOURSELF APART

Leading organisations set themselves apart by achieving a high level of performance in addition to exceeding consumers’ expectations relative to competition. This usually happens after a long process of learning.

Today, it is critical to master the characteristics of agility, where employees stretch their minds to learn new skills and explore new learning approaches. Seeking continuous learning throughout organisations by keeping employees engaged and aware of their individual strategic position is a key weapon to complement megatrends and automation.

It is important to understand that learning is a continuous and progressive process that moulds one into an individual that influences in a positive way with disruptors such as technological breakthroughs, robotics and artificial intelligence.

The process of learning, discovering and developing is significant in launching an individual towards a journey of excellence.

Learning should be mapped alongside an individual’s competency and the person’s motivation in order to serve as a powerful tool to further enhance them.

A self-directed learning process is arguably the most powerful weapon to facilitate and inspire the development of an individual, group and organisation.

The pain of learning – or in a business term, change or enlargement – stretches one’s capability through hands-on projects and boot camps that target specific behaviours to achieve desired learning outcomes.

These activities pressure one to move out of a comfort zone and enable individuals to tap into an inner strength and realise undiscovered potential.

But is it just about inculcating a mindset of learning? Human resources (HR) professionals can drive these advancements through focused learning programmes as well as by creating a culture of continuous learning to force employees to aim beyond their present capabili ties and foster a new strategy to deliver their responsibilities.

Therefore, a firm’s capability to embrace a consistent and progressive learning mindset for its employees will send a positive signal for consistency in performance.

While organisations invest extensively in new strategies to develop their people, it is more evident now that learning strategies need to transition towards embracing modern learning methodologies. Rivals are learning quickly, hence organisations are investing in more sophisticated tools to accelerate the learning process.

PAVING THE WAY AHEAD

So, how can we as HR leaders in knowledge-intensive, modern organisations help our businesses use learning as an inspiration and even, a strategic weapon?

We should consider mapping learning calendars and boot camps against organisational goals and strategic capabilities as an integrated business strategy. It helps teams and individuals seize the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of an integrated learning progression, help them stay ahead of peers and give them an edge for professional growth.

It has been proven that HR leaders who evolve people intellectually hold greater influence over competitors through their experience and skills. Having said that, your organisation has the opportunity to facilitate high level interactive workshops throughout the year which, employees may not have the chance to gain due to time and cost constraints.

This will elevate the skills and competencies of your workforce. Learning can be fully integrated if your strategies and systems are created to promote progressive learning by individuals, teams and the entire organisation.

If you’ve been doing the same thing for a while and find yourself wondering if it’s time to change direction, you probably should.

It is vital for HR leaders to meticulously select the right programmes that are informational, instructional, relevant, integrated and progressive. All these factors enable blended and reinforced learning.

As these approaches are embedded into various kinds of workflow – integrating formal, informal and social learning approaches into day-to-day work – there is no doubt that learning can become a strategic weapon in creating an empowered workforce.

The Science of Building Leaders

Contact us at info@leaderonomics.com to start charting a Learning Calendar for your employees today!
ARRIVING at the Singapore Airport, I saw a man with “Grand Hyatt” on his clipboard. I approached him, asking if they provide a shuttle. He said no, but he could arrange a town car. After confirming the price would be double that of a cab, I told him I’d just grab a taxi. He escorted me to the taxi queue and helped the driver put my luggage into the trunk.

Imagine my delight when I arrived at the Grand Hyatt and a young woman employee opened my cab door and said, “Ms. Morgan, I’ll escort you directly to your room.”

I knew some hotels now have the capability for guests to check in while en route, but I hadn’t done that. I was surprised and delighted. She whisked me up to my room, giving the bellman my room number to deliver my luggage. In the room, she took a picture of my passport with her phone, confirmed my credit card and gave me the key.

Wow! I was unpacking within minutes of arrival.

I wondered how she knew it was me in the cab. Then I remembered the man at the airport. I’d introduced myself with only my first name. I figured he got my full name from my luggage tags and noted the cab number. He’d texted his colleague telling her to expect me within 15 minutes noting the cab number. Then she just had to go outside and open the door of the cab with that number. Still, the forethought and follow through were impressive!

What could you do by coordinating with your colleagues to give your customers a ‘wow’ experience?

SCENE 1

A woman employee opened my cab door and said, “Ms. Morgan, I’ll escort you directly to your room.”

For this year and beyond, our main Leaderonomics goal is to create a ‘wow’ experience for every customer we interact with on a daily basis.

To drill this into us, the leadership has come up with a set of ‘wow’ credo to help us be guided by the ‘why, how and what’ to create that experience with our customers.

LEADERONOMICS ‘WOW’ CREDO

1. We believe in our customers and we truly believe our employees will always do the right thing.
2. We believe our vision and values will always guide all our decisions.
3. We decide to be ‘real’ everyday – not corporate or pompous but to be real and connected with people.
4. We decide to be present always – and we spend our resources to be real and connected with people.
5. We decide to say sorry when we are wrong and we make it right (apologise well and repair the emotional connection).

It’s time to put ourselves in our customers’ shoes and understand their challenges before anything else, and start building a genuine long-term relationship which goes beyond just business transaction. After all, as humans, we bring with us empathy, understanding and forgiveness. Are you up for it? Share with us your encounters of ‘wow’ experiences at editor@leaderonomics.com. Alternatively, tell us how we can create a ‘wow’ experience for you at info@leaderonomics.com.

By REBECCA MORGAN

editor@leaderonomics.com

Nicknamed the “Iron Lady”, few leaders have been as controversial as Margaret Thatcher was during her political career. Leaderonomics CEO, Roshan Thiran shares some leadership insights gained from the life of Britain’s first-ever female Prime Minister – read on at bit.ly/RTmaggiethat

Pearls of Wisdom:— Lailah Gifty Akita, How could we have discovered great lands, if we dare not travel?

Do you know how to get the best out of your talent pool? Talent Assessment Partner at Leaderonomics, Alvin Teoh explains how talent assessments can benefit both the organisation as a whole and the individual experiencing it.

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!
SALARY RAISE?

5 TIPS TO START THE CONVERSATION

I’ve been three years since you first set foot in the office. You love your job and your colleagues love you back. You’re a consistent sales performer who clocks in an average of 12 hours of work a day.

Lately, that has become 14 since you’re ‘temporarily filling up’ for a colleague who left the company six months ago. You’re happy with your work but you also think you deserve more for what you’ve been contributing. You want a salary raise.

Asking for an increase is no doubt a sensitive and awkward conversation with your boss or the HR (human resources) department, especially when you plan to stay for a long time. Companies today don’t regret squeezing the most out of their workers, and you can be a victim of today’s legitimate “underpaid—over-worked” culture unless you start talking.

How should you speak up? Here are five key tips to nailing down a successful negotiation:

1. KNOW YOUR WORTH

Your journey to a successful increase starts with finding out your market value: on average, how much is the industry paying for your position across companies? This benchmarking exercise is important because companies (especially in information technology, manufacturing and real estate) ensure that their compensation schemes are competitive to attract and retain good talent.

Check out payscale.com, getpaid.com or salaryexplorer.com which give a reliable breakdown of salary levels based on position and seniority. If you have skills to scoop for information without invading privacy or breaking ethics, you can also discreetly benchmark your compensation versus your co-workers’.

The rule is simple: if you are getting paid way below the rest, you have a good case to ask for an increase. This is regardless of whether your situation was a result of an oversight by a HR manager, or a deliberate strategy to keep the company’s overhead costs low. On average, it is reasonable to request a 10–25% adjustment of your current salary.

You have nothing to be ashamed of when asking for what is rightfully due: to be compensated for what your expertise is truly worth.

2. PREPARE YOUR CASE

What if your pay is the same as the rest in the industry but you still believe that you deserve more? You, therefore, have to defend a case: why should the company spend more money on you? Everyone must be as busy as you are, so what’s so special about you?

You have to demonstrate your indispensable value as a worker (versus your colleagues who are not asking for a raise), your unique contributions to the company, and the potential of what you can bring to the table once your raise is approved.

Answer the questions below to make your case:

- Is the quantity of your work-load the same as the one promised to you when you signed up for the job? Or has it evolved significantly that it mimics the combined jobs of two to three employees? Do you suspect that the company is taking advantage of your ability to stretch additional workload?

- Apart from the volume of work, is the quality also the same as the one promised in the job advertisement? Or has it evolved to a scope that physically or financially risks your condition? Are you now covering a different time shift? Are you traveling for work too often? Are you more susceptible to overtime that is not accounted for by the company because the work doesn’t happen in the office?

- What have you contributed to the company in the past 6–12 months? How indispensable are these contributions vis-à-vis to what your colleagues have contributed? How consistent will you be in delivering these contributions moving forward? Explain them in either financial or social gains for the company.

Before you channel the ‘Harvey Specter’ in you, remember that you’re not asking for a bigger role in exchange for a salary increase (tip: that’s called a promotion). Rather, you are justifying that your current situation merits higher compensation.

“A promotion is caused by an expansion of your accountabilities reflected by the company’s recognition of your readiness and merit to take on a bigger scope such as managing a team. Meanwhile, a salary increase is a technical adjustment of your compensation to reflect your worth based on your current job role,” explains LA Cruz, an experienced HR practitioner.

In my experience across three industries, almost all types of promotions involve a salary increase, but not all salary increases mean promotion.

By JONATHAN YABUT
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