GRADUATES, ARE YOU READY FOR WORK?

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10 FOCUSING ON THE WILL TO WIN

There will be no physical copy of our pullout next week, but fret not! We’ll have a fresh new issue lined up just for you. Remember to download our EXCLUSIVE digital pullout only at leaderonomics.com! Bookmark bit.ly/ldrEmag to get your copy next Saturday!

If you would like your organisation to be featured in this pullout, contact us at editor@leaderonomics.com
By PRAVIN NAIR
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Revitalising Digital Learning

HOW HR CAN ENHANCE USER ENGAGEMENT

The following are several ways how your organisation could encourage higher engagement rates, thus enhancing your employees’ technical and personal capabilities.

1. **FULL ACCESSIBILITY TO VARIOUS PLATFORMS**

Having an abundance of high-quality learning materials is a key driving force in motivating your employees to get online. There are many open online course platforms that provide technical and soft skills courses, with specialised digital learning solutions that create specific learning courses based on your organisation’s needs.

Accessibility also means having suitable infrastructure to support the implementation of digital learning solutions in your organisation.

For example, studies have shown that learners prefer video-based materials, hence it is crucial that your bandwidth service is sufficient for quick buffering of videos. Make it easy for your employees to access the knowledge made available to them.

2. **MAKE IT PART OF YOUR ORGANISATION’S CULTURE**

We already know that learning is crucial for the development of any individual. However, most users only “learn” when they feel it is necessary to complete their work.

How do we transcend interest for learning from moment of need to moment of want? How can we gently push them to learn willingly and seek for new knowledge outside their business-as-usual tasks?

One way is to encourage a collaborative, rather than competitive learning environment. One common challenge is displaying leaderboards based on the learner’s activity to encourage learning. This does not work as it creates an atmosphere of “envoiling and completing a course” for the sake of climbing to the top of the leaderboard.

3. **FOCUS ON APPLICATION-BASED LEARNING**

The application of knowledge following theoretical learning remains one of the major obstacles for digital learning. Where in traditional classrooms there are demonstrations to further complement what is being delivered, digital learning platforms struggle to replicate the experience due to the complex infrastructure involved.

However, the rise of digital simulations and gamification is slowly giving the digital learning process this edge. Real life applications should be a part of the user’s progress on the platform, replacing the traditional quiz systems which only test knowledge retention and not applicability.

To achieve a collaborative learning environment, organise 30-minute sessions where all your employees are involved. Use this time to talk about the learner’s key findings through the course. Challenge your employees to identify key action steps based on their personal gaps. Invest in a social learning network that will encourage learners to discuss learning challenges with others, so that it creates collective accountability towards learning.

Another way to promote skills application is to encourage employees to utilise key takeaways from their learning courses within their current projects.

For example, if a group of employees have completed a course on managing relationships with key clients, a great opportunity would be to get them involved in roles that would place them in direct contact with clients. Taking calculated risks such as this helps employees enhance and refine the skills acquired through hands-on practical experiences.

**FINAL THOUGHTS**

An employee’s hunger to learn should be reciprocated by the organisation’s higher management as it only serves to make the organisation a smarter, more knowledgeable one.

As learning is a cycle of knowledge absorption, practice, re-learning and reviewing, it is essential that employees are given maximum opportunity to explore their thirst for self-development.

When in the past employees were given timetabled and fixed locations to attend trainings, today it is all about how employees can learn effectively anytime and anywhere, thanks to the advancements in digital learning solutions.

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BUILDING A GREAT CAREER

By ROSHAN THIRAN
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We look ahead of 2018, some will be starting their careers and others will be revising their plans for a change that truly fits their abilities and interests.

Although this is an important step in everyone’s journey, many scratch their heads as they ask themselves: What’s the best way to approach this matter?

In Malaysia, most of us will know what it’s like to go into a new restaurant and pore over the menu. With choices aplenty – it’s no wonder we often plead with the staff for “one more minute, please”. So many options and so little time!

YESTERDAY NO MORE

Yet, for many careers, beginnings begin with relatively little thought. In our younger years, our parents are usually the primary advocates of careers they believe will stand us in good stead. Given our own lack of knowledge of what’s out there, we are mostly content to follow their advice.

However, in his book, No Fears, No Excuses: What You Need to Do to Have a Great Career, Professor of Economics Larry Smith (University of Waterloo) argues that the strategies deployed by our grandparent’s and parents no longer apply to today’s world.

In his thought-provoking book – which followed his highly-acclaimed TED Talk – he outlines the steps that are necessary to build a great career. Smith believes there is no such thing as a “good” career and that we are bound to fail short of fulfilling our potential if we try to apply yesterday’s approach to tomorrow’s world.

As a result, we place ourselves in danger of becoming expendable commodities rather than successful innovators and pioneers.

While Smith’s book is peppered with hard truths, young people starting out in their careers must remember that a change should be reading what he has to say.

He doesn’t argue that being a doctor or lawyer can’t or won’t lead to a great career, but he believes that there is no such thing as a “good” career.

And that we are bound to fail short of fulfilling our potential if we try to apply yesterday’s approach to tomorrow’s world.

As a result, we place ourselves in danger of becoming expendable commodities rather than successful innovators and pioneers.

WHAT’S ‘CAREER’ TO YOU?

One of the reasons I came to read this book is because of the many questions I’ve received from young people who feel like they’ve been on autopilot through school, which they can gain a sense of meaning, purpose, satisfaction, and, to a degree, security.

It’s possible to build such a career, but it does take time and work. While it may seem easier to follow conventional paths and hope for the best, it can be quite a gamble given how much time we spend at work and how little time we spend in career/financial stability were paramount, and years.

In our parents’ time, job security and financial stability were paramount, and years.

The marketplace is increasingly looking for the realization of your talent; if you make a will, you’ll be dead by the end of the week.’

Lesson: Life is never the smooth sail we hope it might be. Sometimes, we can be de-railed and forced to change course; it’s simply a part of life. Who can anticipate every potential outcome? No one. We do not have the knowledge and skills we will need to face the challenges and opportunities of the future, rather than fixate only on what’s going on right now.

The world changes faster than we can imagine. If you had described WhatsApp to a young Smith, he would have thought it the stuff of incredible fantasy. Yet, it’s possible to build such a career, but it does take time and work. While it may seem easier to follow conventional paths and hope for the best, it can be quite a gamble given how much time we spend at work and how little time we spend in leisure.

In their early days, SpaceX and Tesla were all met with skepticism and ridicule. “It’s not possible,” went the clarion call of conventional thinkers. Elon Musk’s first job was a software developer and he was laid off repeatedly. Today’s world demands that we be innovative in our thinking for tomorrow, rather than fixate only on what’s going on right now.

There are many examples throughout the history of great leaders who overcame personal adversity on their road to success.

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The marketplace is increasingly demanding. Setting the bar high for ourselves isn’t just about building a career that you personally find fulfilling – it’s about meeting the demands that we will inevitably face in the future.

If you don’t love what you do, if you don’t find meaning in it, then, as Smith argues, you set yourself up to be an expendable commodity. One of the key reasons why it’s important to build a career based on passions, determination, commitment and effort you bring to what you do every day.

In conclusion

What does it mean to have a great career?

“You are looking for your destiny; you are looking for your life’s work; you are looking for what inspires you to go to battle; you are looking for your personal pathway to accomplishment; you are looking for the realization of your talent; you are looking for the epitaph on your tombstone. That is what a great career is.”

No Excuses; Greatness Comes to Anyone Who Is Willing to Invest in Their Future

1. Threats vs Opportunities

“In my 40s, I ran a large company in the American Midwest. Our CEO managed us with a stick. The company was losing money. It was his job to make us profitable. We were an old company with nothing new to offer. We were an industry with nothing new to offer. We were facing competition. The CEO’s mission was clear: ‘If we can’t do this, we can’t do this, we can’t do this, we can’t do this.’

Lesson: To be stuck in conventional ways of thinking is a recipe for disaster.

We have to look ahead and consider the challenges and opportunities of the future, rather than fixate only on what’s going on right now.

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Second, the marketplace is increasingly demanding.

Lesson: You have to know what holds you back and then confront it. Fear loses its power the moment we decide to face it. Not only do we learn by doing, but we also overcome by doing.

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Roshan Thiran is the Founder & CEO of Leaderonomics — a social enterprise working to transform lives through leadership development. Connect with Soshan on Facebook or Twitter for more insights into business, personal development and leadership. To share insights with us, write to info@leaderonomics.com
If more of us can be open about our failures and show how they helped to lead us to where we are today, perhaps we will come to realise that failure isn’t the end of the world but simply a stepping stone along the path of self-knowledge and learning. Let’s remember that failure is not a bug in life. Check out this article on Leaderonomics.com at: bit.ly/2na4pSI

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ACHIEVING WORK-LIFE BALANCE

By KING QUAH
editor@leaderonomics.com

WHEN we don’t define success, we end up chasing after its shadow. For me, success is the journey towards something – not the final destination. Success is about forming a plan and constantly making sure I follow it.

For instance, if I wake up every morning with the entire day planned out and manage to accomplish most of the things I was set out to do – despite the many distractions and impromptu demands I encounter on a daily basis – then I would consider myself successful.

If I succeed from the planning to the execution stage, I would eventually deem myself successful when I have learnt how to optimise this routine for better results.

NO LIFE, NO WORK

But without life, there is no work. Ultimately, we all have one very important mandate and that is to take care of ourselves.

There are three components that make us holistic beings: the body, the mind, and the soul. We need to nourish and build the body as it serves as our vehicle, nurture the mind as it is our temple, and feed the soul as it is the reason for our being.

I sometimes find myself too busy being busy, and that’s dangerous. When we get too caught up in the hustle, we lose balance.

QUALITY, NOT QUANTITY

Part of being holistic is to spread your attention over time. It is more important to focus on the matters that we’re working on rather than focusing on the amount of time spent doing them.

When we are attentive, we produce higher quality work and we get it done in a shorter time. Spending hours on overtime and dragging your feet to complete a project/task is ineffective.

It is only when we live good wholesome lives, that we can do good work. But how do we go from good to great?

HARD WORK IN SPITE OF TECHNOLOGY

There has never been an easier time to produce good work. With so much information available at our fingertips, we are better informed to make good decisions now than ever before.

Technology has provided a level-playing field to anyone with a decent idea and the will to carry it out. However, it takes grit and hard work to tow the line and do great work. It requires self-leadership and discipline.

Although working smartly with information, technology and automation is crucial, there is still no substitute for hard work.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

There are no real differences between work-life balance then and now; there are only improvements ahead.

Famed English educator and minister Lawrence Pearsall Jacks once quoted: “A master in the art of living draws no sharp distinction between his work and his play; his labour and his leisure; his mind and his body; his education and his recreation. He hardly knows which is which. He simply pursues his vision of excellence through whatever he is doing and leaves others to determine whether he is working or playing. To himself, he always seems to be doing both.”

King is the co-founder and group managing director of Saltycustoms. To share your thoughts with him, email us at editor@leaderonomics.com.

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Cultivating Good Habits

WITH THIS CUNNING PLAN, YOU CAN CHANGE FOR GOOD IN JUST 90 DAYS!

By GEORGIA MURCH

editor@leaderonomics.com

THE biology of our brain is motivat-ed to respond to short-term threats, not those that seem far off in the future. Think about the simple act of saving for your retirement. As a teenager, how important is putting money aside for something that is 50 years away? Even in your 20s, you are more interested in sav-ing for things that gave short-term happiness like clothes, entertain-ment, holidays and household gadgets. It’s only when more and more grey hairs appear, and the weight gets harder to drop, that our future planning becomes much more obvious, a priority and finally, a necessity. “Our brain is essentially a get-out-of-the-way machine,” explains Daniel Gilbert, professor of psy-chology at Harvard University and author of Stumbling on Happiness. “That’s why we can duck a baseball in milliseconds.” We’re also fickle and demand instant publication when we make a decision. The dopamine hit we get when we see someone likes our Facebook post is contributing to a society of “short-termism”. We want to see results and we want to see them now – not in 50 years!

Let’s decide what short-term habits we need to get rid of for the long-lasting bad effects. Did you know that 40% of what we do, daily, is not based on decid-ing to do it? We do most things because they are a habit. This is as true at home as it is in the work-place. We brush our teeth every day, we eat lunch or attend a weekly team meeting because, well, that’s what we do.

Most of us assume we are in control of what we do each day, yet according to Wendy Wood, James B. Duke professor of psychology and neuroscience, much of our everyday behaviours are cued by our environ-ment: “Once you form a habit, it takes willpower to inhibit the trig-gered response. If you don’t have the energy to override the response, you tend to repeat what you’ve done in the past.”

Unless we create the conditions around us to easily work on our new habits, we will revert to our old patterns that are ingrained in our brain.

And that’s exactly what happens when it comes to how we commu-nicate. If you’ve got a track record of avoiding the tough conversations, and nothing in place to push you to have them, you are likely to keep avoiding them.

If your habit is to get defensive, and you have a network of friends or new systems to help you self-regulate, you are likely to keep doing the same old thing, over and over. When we operate in habits, we reduce the amount of time and energy it takes to get things done. It’s just “business as usual”. When we have to go against our habits, it becomes labour intensive and requires more energy.

A change might be including a new person in a decision, or adding another level of testing for a poten-tial product or service. Our efficient brain wants to habitualise things as much as pos-sible so it can create space to think of new and better ways of doing things, to innovate and be creative. It only makes sense that we need to change new habits we have to create a sci-ence about it.

Lessons from Disney

In the early 1980s, Walt Disney Studios was in big trouble. They lost their four top animation directors, and having narrowly escaped a hostile takeover attempt, lost nearly 20% of their animators, had film production delayed, and a number of ser-ious competitors nipping at their heels. Enter chief executive officer, Jeffrey Katzenberg.

Katzenberg was known for his catchphrase, “you’ve got 90 days to change culture before it starts changing you.” The company changes he imple-mented in the first few months of his appointment laid the ground-work for what is now known as the “Disney Renaissance” of the 1990s, when the studio produced and released 10 blockbuster ani-mated films: The Little Mermaid, The Rescuers Down Under, Beauty and the Beast, Aladdin, The Lion King, Pocahontas, The Hunchback of Notre Dame, Hercules, Mulan and Tarzan.

Therefore 90 days is the optimum length of time for a goal.

When we launch something new or drive some kind of change, we need to plan ahead for a dip in momentum and attention. It’s going to come whether we like it or not, so let’s be clever and plan for it. We start out pumped and moti-vated, we fly out of the nest, we flap our wings, we hit wind and obsta-cles, we get tired, we keep trying and eventually, we lose momentum. A 90-day goal allows no time for procrastination and means you get started now. It’s neither too long nor too short a stretch of time to deliver on a goal. It’s a three-month period in which you can define your mis-sion and execute it. Change is seen in nature every 90 days. Employees have 90 days to prove themselves. We review every quarter. I was first introduced to the con-cept of driving change in 90 days through Disney’s 90 Day Roadmap of Management. He explains that, “great organisations implement great projects – it’s what makes them great organisations.”

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

It’s about looking at the change we need to make and breaking it down into manageable, bite-sized chunks. Cook goes on to say that we are not wired for implementa-tion. There needs to be a strategy to make it doable.

When we create new 90-day hab-its, driven as projects, it creates that ripple effect we keep talking about. One change emerges, then the next, then the next. And just as one picks up momentum, we start the next one, and keep the previous ones going. That is how we sustain momentum.

Rupa is a faculty trainer with Leaderonomics. To bring in the team with the same of your university instructors, you can give graduates a career head start, or give graduates a career head start.

For more on leadership insights on the go at leaderonomics.com.
WHETHER you blame robots, artificial intelligence, or automation, many business leaders fear the professional need to plan for a successful career in a future without jobs.

It is not enough to know how to navigate a company hierarchy because that company may completely restructure. It is not enough to understand how to find another job because it might make sense to move to a boutique or launch a business.

It is not enough to develop deep expertise in any one industry because your industry might become obsolete in a few years. Nor can you rely on the skillset that you gained while working in financial services, technical services, or tech roles (which I did when my career started 25 years ago).

In a future without jobs, you have to be far more self-reliant and constantly dream up your own opportunities.

There are three ways to build a successful career in a future without jobs:

1. **BECOME A MONEY MANAGER**

You don’t need to own the wealth manager business specifically. You don’t need to know how to be in financial services or be in any management or finance role. Anybody who relies on their career to make a living will need to learn how to manage money either way.

People are living longer – if your peak career earnings are 30 or 40 years ago, you need to learn how to support yourself in your retirement.

Traditional, defined benefit retirement plans are going away. You may have heard of 401k, but this is just the start. If you have your own business, and you are a chief executive officer, the opportunity to catch up because the job alone will teach you.

This is why I think experience will always trump even paper qualifications from the most prestigious university. I got my first job at 16.

4. **YOU MUST BE PREPARED FOR A FUTURE WITHOUT JOBS**

Many jobs are already “at-will” meaning that your employer can fire you at any time and any reason (and painfully forced to stick it out for years or be out of a job). There may not be another job to jump to, so you need to keep your pipeline of opportunities full and be ready to pivot at any time.

In a future without jobs, you need to be prepared to earn money, manage your everyday budget, and grow your skills.

If you are somebody reading this article with a university course, you may still think it’s too risky.

You need to accept that your current job is a project that may not last. You need to keep your pipeline of opportunities full and be ready to pivot at any time. You need to be ready to get another job to jump to, so you need to keep your pipeline of opportunities full and be ready to pivot at any time.

Cities and industries already upended, you have no choice but to embrace more embrace entrepreneurship. You need to prepare yourself for a future without jobs, you are a money manager, in addition to whatever other roles you hold.

2. **BUILD A BRAND**

Personal branding is not enough.

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3. **TAKE THIS ADVICE WITH A PINCH OF SALT**

Not everyone will fall into the same situation. I did. I was arguably a fortune-teller in the middle of the night.

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His is my current state of mind, how does one become an influence? To put it simply, how does one become a sensational celebrity?

I am a person who is interested in a wide spectrum of topics. From extinct dinosaurs to the world wars, from Albert Einstein’s General Theory of Relativity to the Renaissance, my sense of curiosity is piqued by them all. With an insatiable thirst for the unknown, every once in a while, I still ask myself, “What’s next?”

Ever heard of Neil DeGrasse Tyson? He is a well-known astrophysicist from North America. To me, he’s a powerful magician. Not because he can pull a rabbit out of a hat, but because he can magically grip the heart of his audience with his outstanding charisma.

As someone who has a myriad of interests, I aspire to be like him. I’ve always pictured myself standing on the grand stage, letting the fires of my passion do the talking.

The importance of expressing our thoughts and ideas to the world is perhaps the most crucial. To speak about wisdom, and what we envision for the future is rather naïve, in our future. Whatever it is, be it singing, teaching, playing sports or anything at all! If you don’t try, you can’t learn the valuable lessons the experience has to offer. If you don’t have the talent or aptitude for it, then keep at it until you do!

Think of it as the famous saying, “You’re never going to know, if you’ve never even tried.” Before you start giving excuses as to why you can’t do it, you should actually try putting some effort into doing it first. Whatever it is, be it singing, teaching, playing sports or anything at all! Do you want to do it?

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“Every insight we gain, be it knowledge or life experiences is another reason to express ourselves and inspire others.”

BAPTISM OF FIRE

Everyone had interesting topics to talk about, from pet turtles to biotechnology. For me, it was the perfect opportunity to express my main interest at that time: Hitler’s most monstrous crime, ‘The Holocaust’.

It seemed like I was channelling Hitler himself that day. I was on fire, my speech was full of passion and emotion. Was it worth coming out of my introverted shell? It was. Not only did I score full marks, I was also enlisted into the public speaking squad! It resulted in me participating in two public speaking competitions last year: district and state level. I even made it to the Sunway public speaking finals, a pretty impressive feat since it was my first competition.

It was an amazing experience! However, the nature of public speaking requires us to think critically and intellectually, but when it comes to topics such as patriotism, wisdom, social issues, and others, are we qualified to come up with a suitable argument?

KEY REFLECTIONS

We are young and inexperienced. There are aspects of reality we haven’t been exposed to. To speak about wisdom, and what we envision for the future is rather naïve, in my humble opinion. There’s so much we don’t know about the world we live in today. My takeaway from this experience is that public speaking is a powerful weapon. It can inspire a nation and mend a broken soul. It can also cause harm if it is used by the ignorant and blind.

Well, now you understand why I look up to Winston Churchill and the reason I quoted him earlier. Every insight we gain, be it knowledge or life experiences is another reason to express ourselves and inspire others. Now that I’ve gained a profound insight from this experience, I wonder, what’s next?

NO EXCUSES

There is a famous saying, “You’re never going to know, if you’ve never even tried.” Before you start giving excuses as to why you can’t do it, you should actually try putting some effort into doing it first. Whatever it is, be it singing, teaching, playing sports or anything at all! If you don’t try, you can’t learn the valuable lessons the experience has to offer. If you don’t have the talent or aptitude for it, then keep at it until you do!

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BACK TO BASICS IN PERSONAL BRANDING

WHO ARE YOU BUILDING IT FOR?

By LIM LAY HSUAN
layhsuan.lim@leaderonomics.com

If you're starting out in your university or professional life, take time to do some deep soul-searching and answer these questions:
- Who are you behind closed doors?
- What do you truly value and believe in?
- How can you contribute to ______?
- You fill in the blanks—it could be your family, the community around you, or your future employer.
- How can you make the world a better place?

When you have worked out the smart foundations and given your best to others, you might find surprising returns of your investment in others as your beneficiaries eventually reciprocate to propel your personal branding.

As quoted by Adam Grant in his book, Give and Take: A Revolutionary Approach to Success: "The more I help out, the more successful I become. But I measure success in what it has done for the people around me. That is the real accolade."

ROLE MODELS IN OUR MIDST

Now, you might challenge me to give you examples of ordinary people with extraordinary personal branding built by others around them. Here are two of them:

1. Syed Azmi Alhabshi

Syed Azmi is well known for his charitable good work among the different communities in Malaysia: the home-less, cancer patients, refugees, single mothers and the elderly. A pharmacist by day and a social cause advocate by night, he is just a true giver from the heart and the epitome of a do-gooder.

Together with his friends, supporters and generous donors, he lends his hand wherever possible to anyone who needs it.

His famous ‘helicopter story’ in mobilising disaster relief aid among Malaysians in the 2014 floods shows that despite being a nobody, anybody can make a difference simply by working together.

2. Huang Han

For followers of China’s most popular dating show, Huang Han is a well-loved guest of the show before she called it a day after six years for family reasons.

A social psychology professor from Nanjing University, Huang has gained a large following of millions of young mainlanders with her gentle demeanour and wise counsel on relationships and marriage.

She also has garnered followers from across Australia, showing that others will naturally elevate your personal brand when you choose to be your authentic self and stand by your values.

BRINGING THINGS INTO PERSPECTIVE

Over the years, we have diluted the true value of personal branding by shifting it towards “me, myself and I.”

William Arruda, a prominent personal branding guru who was there from the very beginning when the personal branding movement started, reminds us that, “personal branding works when it is based on authenticity and a genuine desire to add value to those around you.”

As the interpretation evolves with time, perhaps it’s time to go back to the core values and reconnect the foundational building blocks of our character first—integrity, honour and a genuine love for people.

When we have an outlook from that perspective, personal branding becomes secondary, and it will take care of itself without us trying too hard to make it work for us.

Putting personal branding aside, we’d appreciate your concerted effort in helping us build the Leaderonomics corporate brand in the leadership development space so we can continue to serve the community and nation effectively.

Follow us on social media, or see how you can partner with us at info@leaderonomics.com.

If you’re interested in contributing to the platform, we’d love to hear from you!

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IT’S AS IMPORTANT AS THE WILL TO PREPARE TO WIN

By DR TOMMY WEIR
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URING my childhood, those words were preached to me by my dad and sports coaches. For a young, ambitious athlete, there was a constant focus on practice and preparation. In fact, practice seemed to be as important as the Friday night game where I came from.

That conditioning built into me a love for practice which I have carried into my professional life—so much so that I derive almost equal satisfaction from practice as I do from playing the game. For that, I have not just my dad and coaches to thank, but famous basketball coach, Bobby Knight.

After all, the words repeated to me over and again as a kid were in fact his. The rest of Knight’s quote went like this, “Everyone wants to win but not every-one wants to prepare to win. Preparing to win is where the determination that you will win, is made. Once the game or test or project is underway, it is too late to prepare to win. The actual game, test or project is just the end of a long process of getting ready, in which the outcome was really determined. So, if you want to win, you must want to prepare to win. Once you prepare to win, winning is almost anti-climactic.”

In sports, it’s easy to focus on the need for practice—in fact, the majority of an athlete’s time is spent on exactly that—but in our professional lives, the demarcation between practice and “the game” is blurred. In reality, very few professionals have time to practice, unless they are working with a coach. It’s little wonder then that their leadership doesn’t improve.

Paul Fitts and Michael Posner, famed psychologists and experts in the area of learning, have discovered that most of us pass through three distinct stages when acquiring a skill, a behaviour, or an attitude (the three core ingredients of performance).

First stage: Practice—it is here that we consciously focus on getting better. When we improve, we then move into the second stage.

Second stage: On the job improvements. That is, learning by simply doing, not thinking. During this second stage, we concentrate less, as we’re actually getting better at carrying out a task. Then comes the third stage.

Third stage: Auto-pilot kicks in. Instead of improving, we just do. At this point, we feel we’re as good as we need to be and therefore stop practising and preparing. The trouble is, we’re not as good as we need to be, or can be. As Bobby Knight said, it is essential to keep the will to prepare.

Here’s the point: when it comes to being successful, there’s a lot more to it than desire. How? By spending decades studying how to make decisions effectively and constantly learning how to improve his odds of being right. He embodies the will to prepare. Dalio and many other famed executives understand the importance of having the will to prepare, do you?

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

As a chief executive officer (CEO) coach, I spend my life working privately with executives as they prepare to win. You can think of the coaching sessions as practice. Just as athletes spend time in the gym or on field before they step under the spotlights and in front of the crowds, executives need to do the same kind of vital preparation. Knight once said, “Among all the things I believe, and all I’ve gathered from the people who have influenced me, I think one tops the list; The importance of preparation.” He was right.
THERE are three types of people who want solutions but don’t find them, even though answers knock at the door. Finding a solution starts with who you are. These are the three types of people who always get stuck:

1 **PERFECTIONISTS WHO LOOK DOWN ON IMPERFECT PROGRESS**

The need to get it right the first time calls perfectionists to play it safe. Perfectionists feel powerful saying, “That won’t work.” John Acuff says the first lie of perfectionism is, “Quit if it isn’t perfect.”

“Perfectionism is the cousin of stagnation.”

Tip: Ask questions that enable progress.
- What changes if you do nothing?
- What’s the worst that could happen?
- How might you try something that you’re confident will succeed?

2 **KNOW-IT-ALLS FILLED WITH BLAME**

The problem is always others when failure persists and you’re in the right.

“Needy savours validate themselves by solving other people’s problems.”

Tip: Ask questions that enable others to explore their own solutions.
- If I wasn’t here, what would you try next?
- How have you worked through problems like this in the past?
- What might (insert the name of an expert) do?
- What options are available? Which one would you like to try?

Which type of person is most prevalent, from your point of view? Perfectionist, Know-it-all, Victim?

What type of person might look for solutions but doesn’t find them? What might be helpful for them?

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THE WORK-LIFE BALANCE FORMULA

ACHIEVING A BETTER BALANCE REQUIRES DOING A DIFFERENT KIND OF MATH

By JEFF HADEN
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MICHAEL Fassbender was almost bouncing as he walked by me on his way to the driver’s meet-and-greet before the Ferrari Challenge Series at Daytona International Speedway. Spring in his step, smile on his face, fist-bumping people he knew. But he wasn’t acting. This joy was real: Fassbender was going racing. Hold that thought.

THE IMBALANCE

Work-life balance: Everyone talks about it. And everyone struggles to achieve it. Parity’s due to faulty math. Many people assume the only way to achieve work-life balance is to spend the same number of hours on work as they do on “life.”

Spend eight hours at work? Then you must need eight hours of “me time.” But for most people, that seems impossible. Many work more than eight hours a day. Many sleep at least seven hours a day (or at least should). Add in doing chores, eating, showering, commuting, getting a little exercise, and all the other things you need to do every day. What’s left? For many, maybe an hour or two. Which means work and life will never balance.

THE ALTERNATIVE FORMULA

But what if you did a different kind of math? Take Fassbender. I don’t know him, I probably could have spoken to him at Daytona but chose not to. He was clearly immersed in the moment, and the last thing I wanted to do was interrupt that. But I do know a number of actors. I know that when they shoot a movie – and when they’re at the top of the call list, like Fassbender, they typically work 12–14 hours a day.

For weeks on end they don’t have time for “life”. Not really. Achieving anything resembling a reasonable work-life balance is nearly impossible (although Clive Standen gives it a very, very good go.)

What can you do if that’s the case? Focus not on the number of hours you spend on “life”, but on the quality of those hours. That’s how you balance the scales.

Imagine you’re Fassbender. You love racing, so much so that you’re willing to spend a tonne of money to pursue it at a reasonably high level. You love driving. You love competing. You love the camaraderie and the shared sense of purpose and the atmosphere. Well, you just love it. In much the same way that planning a vacation makes people nearly as happy as actually taking that vacation, looking forward to race weekends keeps you going during the darker days of work-life imbalance.

And then, when you do go get to go racing?

QUALITY VS QUANTITY

The quality of the experience far outweighs the quantity of hours involved in that experience.

One race weekend is like spending dozens of evenings on the couch passively enjoying “me time.” And you can do the same. If you feel your work-life balance is out of whack, focus less on the number of “life” hours and more of the quality of “life” hours.

In conclusion

In short, stop trying to balance the hours you spend on work and “life”. That math will always leave you feeling dis-couraged and unfulfilled. Instead, focus on making the most of every “life” hour you have – in whatever ways leave you feeling the most fulfilled. That’s the only way to balance the scales. And is the best way to truly live.

START WITH EVERYDAY THINGS

Don’t watch your kids play; play with them. That will leave you feeling much more balanced – because the time you spent will matter.

Don’t go to the gym and slog through a treadmill workout. Knock out a difficult workout designed to help you achieve a fitness goal. That will leave you feeling much more balanced – because the time you spent will matter.

Shoot, if you just want to veg out, don’t watch whatever happens to be on television.

Don’t settle for whatever seems to be the best option. That’s a total waste of “life” time. Watch something you really want to watch.

Have a list handy. Know ahead of time what you’ll watch if you get the chance. You’ll experience the joy a lot more – and you’ll feel like the time you spent watching TV actually mattered.

Then, in a larger sense, pick something you want to achieve, do, or be, and actively work towards it.

Not only will you enjoy the sense of accomplishment that comes with progressing towards a goal – even if that “goal” is doing something purely for fun – but you’ll also feel better about your “life” in general.

STRADEGISE, SET, GO!

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.
THE HIRING PARADOX
ARE YOU HIRING A HIRELING, HERRING, OR A HERO?

By XAVIER JOHNSON
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WOULD you hire this man if you were the CEO or HR head of an advertising firm? He is 38-years-old and unemployed. He dropped out of college, had been a cook, a salesmen, and had done some PR work. Has no knowledge of marketing and has never done any advertising work, but possesses to be interested in advertising as a career is ready to work as an executive for $50,000 a year.

The notion of hiring such a person goes against conventional wisdom.

And yet, this is a true story. This person was hired, despite conventional wisdom. His name is David Ogilvy, founder of the biggest advertising agency in the world, Ogilvy and Mather. He is known as the “Father of Advertising”, who created success for brands such as Rolls Royce, Schweppes, Dove, and American Express.

So what’s the moral of the story? Do you follow conventional wisdom by hiring based on a set of established practices, predefined criteria, competency framework, culture and values, or do you use ingenuity to hire for success and allow for work, culture and values, or do you use past experiences, models and frameworks, but we must balance between present capability and future potential.

In this case, hiring is a paradox of opposites.

In the light of this paradox, we must reconcile:

- Present performance against future potential.
- Culture, consistency and uniformity versus unity in diversity.
- People who play it safe and those who are willing to stretch the limits.
- Result drivers and relationship builders.
- Original thinkers versus copycat producers.
- Factual faces versus feely fellows.
- Book-smart versus street-smart.
- Creativity versus conformity.
- Employing people who are fired up versus firing them up.
- Learning, unlearning, and experimentation.
- Past experience versus future possibilities.

A HEALTHY BALANCE
There is a prevailing belief that if you hire a misfit, it will be a disaster. It need not be so. However, if an organisation is made up of mainly managers and not leaders, this may be the case.

There is a balance between transactional hiring and transformational hiring.

The trained will become more sought after and the less trained will be sidelined, causing more of a critical industry-induced shortage.

There is actually no shortage of talent, but there is a shortage of trained and transformed talent. Companies need to look at the bigger picture by thinking abundantly. By doing so, they will enhance the overall talent pool.

So, do you pinch or train? Pinching too much can disrupt your internal equilibrium. No pinching may cause complacency. Therefore, manage and balance these two paradoxes.

We hear of highly successful companies like Apple, Google, Zappos, and Microsoft advocating hiring the best. That may be true for a time, but we need to evolve from a Darwinian survival type of hiring to a more equitable and transformational type of win-win system.

From my own observation, I have seen many employees who were once “cold storage” or “sidelined” -- the so-called “misfits” -- transform into high achievers simply because of right input and guidance.

I have seen seemingly insignificant people, who would not normally be employed, rise to the occasion when the opportunity. They would never have had a chance if we simply followed formulas and best practices.

Guidelines are useful, but only inasmuch as they help you -- they don’t act as limitations. Is cultural fit a must? Yes, to some degree, but don’t be constrained by it.

We often adopt best practices, but best past practices suit what has gone before, and won’t necessarily suit your current circumstances.

Over time, the context, time, players and landscape will change. We need to be receptive, perceptive and proactive in order to maximise talent, potential and performance.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS
Having a map is useful but it does not fully reflect reality. Past experiences, precedents and judgments must be evaluated in the light of current reality and changing dynamics.

Evolve your own best practices and don’t be swayed by hiring myths, trends and fables. Be realistic and ready to adapt in the light of your culture, business, brand and vision. Hiring must be a lively and liberating experience – not a laborious one.

Let’s revisit the story of David Ogilvy. I am sure the firm had hiring guidelines but, reconciling the paradox between experience and potential, they caused the exponential growth of the biggest and most successful advertising agency in the world.

If he wasn’t hired, David Ogilvy could have ended up as an unknown cook in an unknown town writing menus and making coffee instead of writing copy, and who knows how that would’ve affected the advertising industry.

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Xavier Johnson is the managing consultant of Waterhouse Consult Think, a strategic organisation development, HR and business consulting firm that focuses on aligning people and talent to the business delivery system for maximising ROI, using a design thinking methodology. He is a faculty of Leaderonomics. To engage with Xavier for your organisation, write to info@leaderonomics.com
I learnt of this phrase, transferrable skills, very early in my career. Partly because I read a lot, but also because circumstance gave me a lot, and this word became a key part of my career journey.

The dictionary defines it as abilities and skills that are relevant and helpful across different areas of life, socially or professionally. I define it as the most important thing one should learn as you move up in your career.

Let me explain my career a bit. I started off as an electronics engineer which was great for my first job as a firmware engineer in the data storage industry, but it all became irrelevant from then on.

This is more common than you would think, as Careenbuilder in a 2013 study noted that 47% of college-educated workers had a first job that was outside their field.

Hence, the more urgent need to understand what works as you move across industries and job fields, as I’ve done in my career.

When I moved back to Malaysia, I found myself without a job, and having to learn to programme and deliver software in the finance industry.

Funny story: During the interview, I was given a programming test.

To which my reply was, “Give me a week to learn programming and I will be back.” Somehow it worked, and I came back in a week and got the job. I spent the whole week learning everything I could about VB6 (yes, I’m old).

THAT BRINGS US TO LESSON #1

Make sure you have a thirst to learn and that you learn fast. You live in a world that is moving faster than most can keep up with. There are plenty of articles out there about the need for people to re-skill as technology (in particular Artificial Intelligence) will replace most career choices.

The Future of Employment report predicts that 47% of total US employment is in the high-risk category of being replaced by automation. Even without moving careers, we will need to embrace fast learning as the No.1 transferable skill. This message was reinforced again for me when I read an article by Susan Peter, senior vice-president of HR at GE. In describing the newly identified CEO for GE, after a six-year succession planning process, her first description was as follows: “In John Flannery, our company’s next CEO, the GE Board has selected a life-long learner and a strong operator with global experience.”

Without this desire to learn and willingness to learn, you will not be able to keep learning.

But then I look back at how I interview candidates. Often, I would ask people, “What do you like about Microsoft?”

During the interview, it was obvious that I did not have the technical skills for the job, which required automation and PLC knowledge. (At that point, I wasn’t even sure how a PLC worked.)

To my surprise, I was offered the job two weeks later. I called back my interviewer to ask why, and to share my surprise at the decision. The answer was that I had the know-how to get the job done. They trusted that I had what it takes.

That was the first time I realised I could get hired for my leadership competencies and not for my functional competencies.

LESSON #2

Leadership skills are transferable even when functional skills are not. Hence, leadership skills are the most important attribute you can develop.

The prospect of joining a company that was establishing a manufacturing presence in Malaysia and to be part of that pioneer team was too much for me to resist. I began a career in manufacturing automation, which brought me great satisfaction and success.

The leadership skills that I was hired for are generally the leadership competencies that you find in most companies. A good reference is to use the 20 CCL leadership competencies, which can easily be mapped to most organisations’ needs.

Till today, I firmly believe in focusing on the competencies of leading self, leading others, and leading organisations as a basis for success.

The next step in my career took me into the world of programme or project management and delivery in the supply chain industry. Again, I felt like a fish out of water as I had to learn a new culture, new leadership styles, a new software language, and a new project methodology, not to mention a new industry.

The most jarring was the culture and style, as the company had grown rapidly from a start-up to an enterprise software company primarily with the same group of people.

As more people were hired from the outside, there were challenges in both culture assimilation as well as mismatched expectations. I learnt my third lesson here.

LESSON #3

Open your mind to new possibilities and adopt quickly. Most people tend to bring their baggage with them, and as humans, show some bias with “how we used to do things.”

I learnt quickly to challenge myself to assimilate and accept the current best practices in the organisation.

Only after many months of assimilation, did I then try to step back into my experience and challenge what I knew versus what I had learnt. You see, if you don’t give it a chance, most of us will wind up being biased with what worked for us before.

That bias makes adaptation slower and more challenging. It also leads to dissatisfaction, either in the new hire or the existing employees, especially when you take on a leadership role.

We must approach all new experiences with an open mind. It’s important to bring your experience to bear on any new circumstances. But as the wise say, you should first strive to observe, listen and learn, before speaking. As the adage goes, ‘that’s why we have two ears but only one mouth.’

Those are the top three lessons that I learnt that will allow you to move into leadership roles in a new function or role, in a new organisation, in a new industry and still find success.

1. Passion for learning, and a fast learning curve
2. Leadership skills – how you lead yourself, how you lead others, how you lead an organisation.
3. Adaptability and an open mind.

Now, convincing your interviewer of the same… well, that’s for another article!

It also starts with you believing that what you have is enough to bring to the table. Once you have the leadership competencies, you must have the self-belief that you will be able to help the organisation you seek to join – that you can do what it takes. You’ve got to start with that:

Regardless of profession or title, at some level we are all hired to do the same job. We are all problem solvers, paid to anticipate, identify, prevent, and solve problems within our areas of expertise. This applies to any job, at any level, in any organisation, anywhere in the world, and being aware of this is absolutely vital to job search and career success in any field.”