WALKING IN HER SHOES

3 INSIGHTS FROM MARGARET THATCHER

6 GIVING WITH A PURPOSE

9 ARE YOU A VISION WORKER?

Leaderonomics wishes all women Happy International Women’s Day! (March 8)

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5 Good Habits to Boost Your Self-Confidence

By PETER ECONOMY
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“Low self-confidence isn’t a life sentence. Self-confidence can be learnt, practised, and mastered – just like any other skill. Once you master it, everything in your life will change for the better.”

Barrie Davenport, author

SELF-confident people are admired by others and inspire confidence in others. They face their fears head-on and tend to be risk takers. They know that no matter what obstacles come their way, they have the ability to get past them. Self-confident people tend to see their lives in a positive light even when things aren’t going so well, and they are typically satisfied with and respect themselves.

Wouldn’t it be amazing to have this kind of self-confidence, every day of the week? Guess what? You can! It comes down to one simple question: If you don’t believe in yourself, how do you expect others to do so?

Try some of the following tips. Don’t just read them and put them on the back burner. Really begin to practise them daily, beginning today.

You might have to fake it at first and merely appear to be self-confident, but eventually you will begin to feel your confidence grow.

With some time and practice (this is not an overnight fix), you can be a self-confident person, both inside and out.

Create a great list
Life is full of challenges. There are times when it’s difficult to keep our self-confidence up.

Sit down right now and make a list of all the things in your life that you are thankful for, and another list of all the things you are proud of accomplishing. Once your lists are complete, post them on your refrigerator door, on the wall by your desk, on your bathroom mirror – anywhere that you can easily be reminded of what an amazing life you have and what an amazing person you really are.

If you feel your self-confidence dwindling, take a look at those lists and let yourself feel and be inspired all over again – by you.

Be prepared
Learn everything there is to know about your field, job, presentation – whatever is next on your “to conquer” list.

If you are prepared, and have the knowledge to back it up, your self-confidence will soar.

Stay away from negativity
This is the time to really evaluate your inner circle, including friends and family.

This is a tough one, but it’s time to seriously consider getting away from those individuals who put you down and shred your confidence.

Even a temporary break from negative people in your life can make a huge difference and help you make strides towards becoming more self-confident.

Be positive, even if you’re not feeling it quite yet.

Put some positive enthusiasm into your interactions with others and hit the ground running, excited to begin your next project.

Stop focusing on the problems in your life and choose instead to focus on solutions and making positive changes.

It comes down to one simple question: If you don’t believe in yourself, how do you expect others to do so?

Don’t accept failure
Never give up. Never accept failure. There is a solution to everything, so why would you want to throw in the towel? Make this your new mantra. Succeeding through great adversity is a huge confidence booster.

Low self-confidence is often caused by the negative thoughts running through our minds on an endless cycle.

If you are constantly thinking you’re not good enough, you are creating a self-fulfilling prophecy. You are becoming what you are preaching inside your head, and that’s not a good habit.

The next time you hear that negative voice in your head, switch it immediately to a positive affirmation and keep it up until it hits the calibre of a self-confidence boost.

Be aware of your body language
This is where posture, eye contact and speech come into play. Just the simple act of pulling your shoulders back gives others the impression that you are a confident person.

Smiling will not only make you feel better, but will make others feel more comfortable around you. Imagine a person with good posture and a smile and you’ll be envisioning someone who is confident.

Look at the person you are speaking to, not at your shoes – keeping eye contact shows confidence. Speak slowly.

Research has proved that those who take the time to speak slowly and clearly feel and appear more confident to others.

The added bonus is your audience will actually be able to understand what you are saying.

Go the extra mile and style your hair, give yourself a clean shave, and dress nicely.

Not only will this make you feel better about yourself, but others are more likely to perceive you as successful and confident as well.

Be a confident leader!
4 Leadership Lessons from Margaret Thatcher

By ROSHAN THIRAN
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Thatcher was born in 1925 and grew up in the apartment above her parents’ grocery store in Grantham – a market town in Lincolnshire, England. As a student at Oxford University, she graduated with a degree in Chemistry, and later went on to study Law, qualifying as a barrister in 1953. She was first elected to the House of Commons in 1959, and was made a junior minister for pensions in 1961 by the then Prime Minister, Maurice Harold Macmillan. Following a successful leadership bid for the Conservative Party in 1975, Thatcher was elected Britain’s first female Prime Minister in 1979 and would hold the office for 11½ years! ***

One of her key strengths was communication. She always managed to communicate really well with humour and candour. When asked what she thought of being powerful, she said, "Being powerful is like being a lady. If you have to tell people you are, you aren’t.” Thatcher believed that great leaders never needed to declare their greatness. People know they are great by their actions.

When asked why she hated consensus, she replied, “If you look at the great religions — and the Judeo-Christian religion is really at the heart — would you have those great guidelines if Jesus had said, ‘Brothers, I believe in consensus’? Of course not. You’d have nothing of value.” As leaders, one of the hardest things do is to do the right thing. It’s easier to do the popular thing or the easy thing. Doing what you truly believe and are deeply conviction about is scary and tough. Usually, these are things no one wants to hear. As parents, it is to discipline our children when needed. As business leaders, it is to provide tough feedback and on occasion, ‘discipline’ and push your employees beyond their capabilities. It is to restructure and reshape the business when needed.

In today’s world, we need convicted leaders. We have many politically-correct leaders, but we need leaders who go against convention and stands firm. Great leaders like Thatcher had the clarity of vision and conviction to ensure impact. Do we stand our ground in our organisations? Do we have a clear conviction on where to take our organisation?

1. The convicted leader

While there is plenty of commentary on the many political challenges she faced and the decisions she took (such as privatisation, education reform and the Falklands War), there is no dispute that Thatcher was a strong leader who knew exactly what she stood for.

She once said, “I am not a consensus politician. I’m a conviction politician.”

“Look at a day when you are supremely satisfied at the end. It’s not a day when you lounge around doing nothing; it’s a day you’ve had everything to do and you’ve done it.”

Margaret Thatcher

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2. Strengths can turn to weakness

Receiving the nickname “The Iron Lady” from a young journalist (meant as a derogatory term, but used to her advantage), Thatcher was resolute in her beliefs. This proved to be both a strength and a weakness, and one that led to the end of her political reign. Inflexibility is a potential recipe for disaster – closing yourself off to others means missing out on valuable perspectives.

One of the biggest issues with leaders as they age is learning agility. Leaders who are starting out in their careers usually are clearer; they forget that the path to achieving their vision becomes scarier and tough. Usually, these things to do is to do the right thing. It’s easier to do the popular thing or the easy thing. Doing what you truly believe and are deeply conviction about is scary and tough. Usually, these are things no one wants to hear. As parents, it is to discipline our children when needed. As business leaders, it is to provide tough feedback and on occasion, ‘discipline’ and push your employees beyond their capabilities. It is to restructure and reshape the business when needed.

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3. Fixing the ‘sick man of Europe’

When Thatcher first came to power, Britain was known as the “sick man of Europe”, and she worked tirelessly to transform the economic reality for the country.

As Lady Virginia Bottomley (Conservative Member of Parliament from 1984–2005) put it, “Through her leadership and personal conviction she restored our confidence, self-belief and entrepreneurial spirit.”

One of Thatcher’s most noted accomplishments was the decision to deregulate the London Stock Exchange in 1986, which would lead the city to the forefront of world finance. At the start of 2010, the financial sector had an estimated worth of £125bn and London still retains a strong reputation in the world of finance.

Great leaders are people of action. They are biased for closure. Thatcher got results. To read the rest of the article, head over to leaderonomics.com or key in bit.ly/RTmaggiehat

People don’t remember us for what we do for ourselves but for what we do for them. They remember your leadership, service, character and inspiration. Hence, your legacy is more about who you are and the role you played in the life of a supportive husband to Margaret. She described him as the “golden thread” running through her life. He was her everyday hero. Check out this article on Leaderonomics.com: bit.ly/ETDenis-thatcher

Roshan Thiran is the founder and CEO of the Leaderonomics Group and is constantly amazed by the numerous leadership lessons he derives from historical figures. One of his favourite historical figure is Helen Keller and he lives by her quote, “Life is either a daring adventure or nothing.” Follow Roshan’s daily adventures and leadership tips on his LinkedIn, Twitter and also on his Facebook page at http://bit.ly/LrERTD0

Picture courtesy of Wikimedia
The Imperfect World
Perfectionism is probably killing you and you don’t even know it

By MINDA ZETLIN
editor@leaderonomics.com

Are you a perfectionist? If the answer is yes, are you secretly proud of it?
You may think the fact that you never accept second best from others or yourself is behind all your career and personal accomplishments.

Most people who say, “I’m a perfectionist” are really just engaging in a humblebrag.

Perfectionism doesn’t make you better at anything, according to a fascinating research done by Thomas Curran and Andrew P. Hill, of the University of Bath and York St. John University, respectively.

Curran and Hill have done a massive review of studies from 1989–2017, measuring rates of perfectionism over the years, and their effects on people.

Perfectionism is bad for your health
The results are disturbing. They found that perfectionism is associated with a wide range of mental illnesses, including depression, social anxiety, agoraphobia, anorexia, insomnia, self-harm and suicidal ideation.

They also found that the rates of perfectionism are increasing, especially among young people and even children.

One psychologist who specialises in eating disorders has been surprised and dismayed to find younger children among her patients, even as young as seven years old. She thinks perfectionism may be to blame.

Perfectionism may actually shorten your life
A 2009 study found that people who tested high for perfectionism had a greater chance of dying in the following few years than those who did not.

It doesn’t make you work harder
Unfortunately, most perfectionists are reluctant to give up their perfectionism.

This is often because they believe that being a perfectionist makes them better at their jobs, better at keeping a spotless home, or a perfect weight, or better at parenting – which is not true.

In fact, in one experiment, Hill gave some perfectionists and non-perfectionists a task to complete but did not tell them that it was in fact impossible to complete.

They all worked hard at it for a while, but the perfectionists got more upset and gave up sooner.

In any endeavour – from winning an Olympic medal to running a successful company – the ability to persevere even when things are going badly is a key element of success, and it’s an element that perfectionists tend to lack.

Far from making you better at your job, perfectionism is actually harming your performance. Given all these findings, it’s high time we stopped idolising perfectionism.

The next time someone “admits” that they’re a perfectionist, try saying this: “Oh, that’s awful, I’m so sorry to hear that. Have you tried counselling?”

Detox for perfectionists
If you yourself are a perfectionist, it’s time for a change.

Begin with an experiment: Try letting go of some of the things you “have” to do in order to meet your own standards.

For instance, if you think you “need” to work late every evening, try not doing it for a week and see what happens.

You may indeed fall behind, in which case perhaps your job needs some adjustment or you may need to delegate better.

But you may also be surprised to find you’re doing your job better because a well-rested brain works better than an exhausted one.

You may also find, as British Broadcasting Corporation journalist Amanda Ruggeri did, that letting go of some of those expectations of yourself makes you feel strangely free.

Most importantly, work on silencing that internal voice that scolds and criticises every time you fail to live up to its exacting standards.

It’s making you unhappy and it’s detrimental to your job performance. Worse, it’s slowly killing you.
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
Are they the next industry disruptor?

By BARBARA RUBIO
editor@leaderonomics.com

This is the first in a series of three articles devoted to unpacking the benefits and necessity of equality, diversity and inclusion in the 21st century communities and business.

What do the terms mean?

Equality and diversity is the term used to talk about equal opportunities.

1. Equality

Equality refers to the legal and moral requirement to ensure equal rights and treatment for all individuals, which enables us to create a fairer society where everyone can fulfill their full potential.

In the same way, we like to be treated with respect and dignity in our homes, schools, workplace and countries at large.

Others like to receive the same treatment too, regardless of what our perceived differences are. It is everyone’s responsibility to address and protect people against unfair treatment, discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

2. Diversity

Diversity focuses on recognising, understanding, respecting and valuing the differences and similarities we share with others.

Despite the differences in age, ethnicity, belief or gender between ourselves and others, it does not stand to reason that we should discriminate against others on these bases.

Most people, particularly those who are seasoned travellers, will have experienced the comfort of being an ordinary citizen at home, yet a complete alien in another country—often more vulnerable and perhaps susceptible to discrimination.

3. Inclusion

Inclusion is thus the conscious effort an individual, community or company makes to involve the often marginalised and under-represented groups in its environment for mutual benefit and growth.

Legal requirements

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) requires all countries, including Malaysia, to abide by it. It includes equality provisions—Article 2 in particular—to prohibit discrimination on a wide range of grounds, such as race and ethnicity, age, gender, sex, religion and belief, and disability.

In Malaysia, the Federal Constitution of 1957, Article 8, covers equality before the law and non-discrimination laws.

In addition, the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia Act 1999—Article 4(4)—recognises the commitment to abide by the UDHR, although it stipulates that, where inconsistent with the Federal Constitution, the latter shall override.

Other United Nations Human Rights treaties encourage all countries to adopt universally recognised laws that protect the rights of all.

Malaysia has committed itself to just three of the major United Nations human rights treaties, namely the:

• Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
• Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)
• Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)

However, there are still many other areas where human rights violations still occur in the workplace and the community at large, which could be tackled through the adoption of more inclusive policies in the workplace.

Moral duty

There are many companies that seek to actively discriminate against individuals.

Women are regular victims of unfair treatment such as receiving lower salaries than men in the same role or being forced to sign clauses in their contracts which prevent them from becoming pregnant within a specific time.

Yet, contracts to male employees do not require them to put their reproductive rights in the hands of their employer.

This difference in the way employers view and treat their staff and discriminate on the basis of gender helps us build a moral argument for the implementation of universal values at work that protect all from discrimination.

Fair treatment contributes to an inclusive work environment in which individuals are valued for their skills and performance, as opposed to being judged for the similarities or differences in traits shared with the rest of the workforce.

Fair treatment puts our humanity and rights, not profit, at the centre of a company’s ethos.

Where values and integrity matters, this approach to business makes a company attractive to highly skilled employees of different backgrounds who look for employers with similar values to commit to.

Attracting global talent and a diversified workforce also leads to better intercultural understanding that favours local and global business.

Business advantages

There are many advantages by operating an inclusive work environment and aligning a company’s vision and values with international standards of equality and diversity.

By virtue of a strong legal and moral code of ethics, companies empower their workforce, which in turn generates higher levels of engagement amongst staff, thus reducing staff turnover, being able to retain talent and boosting business profits.

The best companies are constantly looking for ways to stay relevant.

They know that reputation can make or break a brand. Many multinational as well as local companies are developing strategies to compete in globalised markets and to stand out from the rest.

To read the rest of the article, head over to leaderonomics.com or key in bit.ly/BDiversityInclusion

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Asian Women Philanthropists

What we can learn from them

By LIM KA EA and SARAH KAPADIA

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Critical thinking is one of the essential skills that contribute to an individual’s career success, regardless of one’s profession, especially in the future of work. The good news is anyone can train their minds to think critically. Check out the article on Leaderonomics.com: bit.ly/2A4ZmgWd

If you are experiencing burnout, no amount of external motivation can alleviate your thoughts and emotions. One way out is to adopt self-care strategies that will help you adopt new perspectives. Check out these tips on Leaderonomics.com: bit.ly/39uNo4t

Kia Ea is the project manager at the Malaysian Centre for Constitutionalism and Human Rights (MICHR), and a member of People Against Cyber Threats/Harassment (PeopleACT). She believes that human rights is firstly common sense and should be second nature to all. The content of this article was researched by Sarah Kapadia, who works with Kia Ea. What did you think of this article? Email us at editor@leaderonomics.com

IN 2017, the Forbes Heroes of Philanthropy list revealed that out of the 40 philanthropists listed, only six are women. In one of its publications, the Economist states that female philanthropists in Asia are falling behind their male counterparts. So it seems that women philanthropists are still considered as rare gems, even more so in Asia, but this is about to change gradually as the latest Forbes’ list of the world’s self-made female billionaires revealed that out of the 56 women on the list, 29 came from Asia-Pacific.

With 15 of the newcomers, 13 hailed from China, Hong Kong, Vietnam and Japan. With the expected surge of women philanthropists in Asia, there is no better time to find out what we can learn from them.

While most of them possess more than just a few shared values, the four chosen for this article have one thing in common – they made their own fortune. This means they do not rely on existing family wealth or inheritance to be financially successful.

Key lessons

Here are the five key lessons from these women (see accompanying story for their background).

1. Being emotional about something is not enough, you need to take action

For six years, Kiran watched her best friend suffer from the effects of breast cancer treatment. Not only did her friend have to endure a series of undignified and uncomfortable sessions of chemotherapy and radiation, she was also burdened by the exorbitant cost incurred from these medical treatments. As a personal caregiver to her beloved friend, Kiran was affected by her subsequent death.

She told Forbes, “I saw the struggle that she went through – the crippling financial burden, the treatments, the disease itself. I know how awful it is. I just had to do something.”

That was when she pledged much of her fortune to cancer research and making healthcare more affordable for India’s rural poor, among other things.

Kiran often confessed to not always being the bubbly and cheerful persona you see of her on her YouTube channel when she was younger.

Being vulnerable to chronic depression as a child, her life could have easily taken quite a different turn.

In fact, her attempt to deal with her depression was what drove her to starting her highly successful YouTube channel, Superwoman. Naturally, Lilly has a soft spot for mental health issues and has always been a huge advocate for positive self-image and anti-bullying.

She has invested personally in causes such as the Girl Love campaign to end girl-on-girl hate and instead encourage women and girls to support each other. All of us either have or will subsequently face at least one form of setbacks in our lives, something that would have affected us negatively.

We have a choice to either succumb to our emotions, or do something about it and change the status quo. In her book How To Be a Bawse: A Guide to Conquering Life, Lilly attributes a lot of her success in life by keeping her emotions out of the way because emotions “can cloud your judgment and reduce productivity.”

Instead, she advises her followers to be goal-oriented and focus on results.

Before the start of a video production, she would make it clear to her team that because the stakes are high for her to produce something good within a short time-frame, she needs to expect everyone to work at their best.

In such a highly stressful environment, communication needs to be short and straightforward as there is no time for pleasantries. She may yell at someone who is not performing, but this does not mean she has anything against that individual personally.

It is only to remind everyone to step up their game because the team counts on each other to deliver.

She advised that communicating this to your team at the start of every project is important so that no one needs to feel offended. They just need to understand that it is nothing personal but only for the good of the project.

2. Don’t just give, give responsibly and strategically

According to UBS Wealth Management, women philanthropists are more focused on investing to achieve positive social change, in contrast to their male counterparts.

This means, instead of donating money or supporting a specific charity, women are more willing to set up a foundation of their own. However, the Economist published that compared to 80% of female philanthropists from America, only 30% of Asian women billionaires listed on Forbes have a foundation.

Out of the four women, only Yoshiho and Kiran have their own foundation to promote the individual causes they believe in.

In the meantime, Zhonghui has tried giving her money away through other foundations, one-off donations, and supporting other social enterprises, but admitted that she inclined to “pursue a philanthropic foundation approach in the future”.

Why are more and more women turning to setting up their own foundation as a philanthropic model?

According to Yinuo Li, director of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation’s office in China, many donors are adopting a donor-driven approach towards philanthropy due to the mistrust of non-governmental organisations.

In contrast to just giving their money to a charity without further hands-on commitment, by having their own private foundation, these women are able to dictate and have control of how their money is being spent, including who they want to hire to implement projects, and this often translates to better accountability.

For these women, it is not enough to just give. It must first...
These women manage to drive their emotions by turning them into something meaningful and purposeful.

She said signing the pledge serves two purposes – holding herself accountable for fulfilling her social responsibility and setting an example to her peers by inspiring them to do the same.

Kiran has publicly pledged to give away 75% of her wealth to philanthropy after she dies. She also maintained that she would sign the Giving Pledge as a way to “get others to understand the importance of philanthropy to change our world.” In addition to this, Kiran has publicly declared that her legacy is going to be in affordable healthcare and that she is willing to invest in developing that model and the policies around it. True enough, she has been persistently honouring her public announcements through her philanthropic missions. Perhaps none of the women mentioned here lead a more public life than Lilly. In many ways, her appearances on YouTube hold her accountable for many of the positive messages she has been sharing online.

The next time you are inspired to do something good, announce it on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. By committing yourself publicly, you hold yourself to a higher standard of accountability.

5. Mistakes are your best friend
Yoshiko has said, “Mistakes are the sea of opportunity” while Lilly’s preferred mantra has been, “Mistakes are cool!” If one were to scrutinise Yoshiko’s past life, one may conclude that it has been a series of ‘mistakes’. She was raised by a single mother, did not complete her college education and was divorced before she was 30. After her divorce, she struggled through life by working in different jobs while maintaining a frugal lifestyle. Instead of viewing her misfortunes as mistakes, Yoshiko turned them into opportunities.

As a single woman in the 1950s trying to make ends meet, Yoshiko understood the challenges faced by women in Japan, particularly in what she saw as a society largely dominated by men, and where women had to miss work opportunities due to family obligations. That was when she started TempStaff, a company that provides women with part-time jobs so that they could fulfill their domestic obligations while still play an active part in the workforce. This is the industry that has built her fortune and allowed her to help others.

In her book, Lilly says, “If you’re making mistakes, you’re making the necessary moves to figuring it all out. “If you think there are 10 possible ways to do something, and you just made a mistake, congratulations! You just discovered way number four doesn’t work. That’s progress!” She said that we have been paying so much in tuition or college fee while all the time, mistakes are lingering around for free ready to school us.

Therefore, whether you are a chief executive officer of a multi-million dollar company or someone who is just starting out as an intern in a non-profit organisation, mistakes are your best friend.

In a nutshell
One may ask if there is any unique or significant difference these female and Asian philanthropists have brought to the world of philanthropy. The answer is probably no, except perhaps they defy some of the stereotypes society often impose on them because of their gender; e.g. being emotional and irrational. If anything, these women manage to drive their emotions by turning them into something meaningful and purposeful.

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As a single woman in the 1950s trying to make ends meet, Yoshiko understood the challenges faced by women in Japan, particularly in what she saw as a society largely dominated by men, and where women had to miss work opportunities due to family obligations. That was when she started TempStaff, a company that provides women with part-time jobs so that they could fulfill their domestic obligations while still play an active part in the workforce. This is the industry that has built her fortune and allowed her to help others.

In her book, Lilly says, “If you’re making mistakes, you’re making the necessary moves to figuring it all out. “If you think there are 10 possible ways to do something, and you just made a mistake, congratulations! You just discovered way number four doesn’t work. That’s progress!” She said that we have been paying so much in tuition or college fee while all the time, mistakes are lingering around for free ready to school us.

Therefore, whether you are a chief executive officer of a multi-million dollar company or someone who is just starting out as an intern in a non-profit organisation, mistakes are your best friend.

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A Fervent Dream

What do you do when you’re faced with criticism?

By IVEY LYNNE
editor@leaderonomics.com

Fervour could be interpreted as enthusiasm, zeal, conviction or belief. To me, fervour is passion that glows and burns at heart.

We all have dreams, and my fervent dream is to become a singer. Grammy award-winning singer/songwriter Taylor Swift, for example, is a great inspiration to me.

From being a small-town country singer in Tennessee to becoming a global name, her rise to success is my motivation to pursue my dream.

Voice of the critics

Despite being one of the top singers of today, Swift faced and still faces a lot of criticisms.

Yet, she’s still down to earth and never forgets to appreciate the people who were instrumental in taking her to the top; her family and fans.

She was surrounded by people who believed in her and who encouraged her to aim for the stars.

In the pursuit of your dreams, you will come across many types of people along the journey. Some believe in you, some just don’t.

As a student, most tend to discourage me because they feel that education is more important than chasing ‘trivial’ pursuits like singing.

Not forgetting, everyone has an opinion about your dream. I have gone from highs to lows, but I always try to find the courage to face them. I tell myself that everyone faces discouragements when pursuing his/her dreams.

A different perspective

Nevertheless, not all criticisms are bad. There are people who offer constructive feedback; encouraging and truthful comments.

I have learnt to analyse the criticisms that come, looking at them with eyes of objectivity – not taking it personally – and doing my best to learn from my mistakes.

That’s the key in staying passionate about your dream – filtering which criticisms to focus on, and which to ignore. The choice is yours: to move forward with optimism and persistence, or give up because of the obstacles you face.

Any obstacle can be overcome when your passion burns within you. There’s a sweet victory in being tenacious and proving the naysayers wrong.

Forget not your beginnings

Of course, it’s also important to stay grounded. With each success, don’t forget your roots. Always reflect on how far you’ve come and never forget your humble beginnings. That realisation makes you grateful and humble.

Where there is a will, there is a way. Don’t ever give up on your dreams without a fight, and if you really want something, you’ll find a way to reach your dreams.

My M.A.D. Journey

From initial reluctance to its reward, it’s all worth it!

By ASHLEY JANE WONG
editor@leaderonomics.com

“Why am I here? I hate this, I don’t want to do this.”

I remember these thoughts throughout my first day at camp. It was 2014, and I was at my first DIODE camp, i.e., the year-end Tweens Leadership Camp organised by Leaderonomics Youth.

It began when my mother came across a newspaper article advertising such leadership camps. She felt that my sister and I were “phone-obsessed.” So, she signed us up for the camps!

The protest and surprise

As you would have guessed the response from pre-teens or teenagers like us, my sister and I begged our mother to change her mind. But looking back now, I’m very grateful she didn’t budge.

One of my earliest memories of Tweens was in the bus heading towards the campsite. One of the facilitators had asked us to raise our hands if our parents had “voluntarily” forced us to join the camp.

Immediately, my hand went up—as did nearly everyone else on the bus! It made me realise that we all had something in common, and we weren’t as different as it seemed.

All said and done, I had a blast at Tweens camp. I met so many new friends, had so much fun and discovered new things about myself.

I got to work on my confidence, communication, networking and leadership skills. Tweens camp was merely the first stepping stone of my M.A.D. (Making A Difference) journey.

The road to self-discovery

I became a camper again in 2016, but this time, at DIODE’s Youth Leadership Camp. Again, it was a very memorable experience, as I had some family members with me.

Not only were my elder sister and cousin facilitating, I had another cousin accompanying me as a camper too.

If I had a chance to relive that camp, I would. I did things I never would have done, such as volunteering for activities and talking to complete strangers. I made lasting friendships, and even longer-lasting memories. I came back from camp feeling like a version 2.0 of myself.

I was overjoyed when I received an email from the DIODE team inviting me to a facilitator audition. Now, I have to thank my sister for contributing in my M.A.D. journey. She is an accomplished facilitator herself and often regaled us with tales from the camps she had facilitated—making you want to experience them too.

I thank her for preparing me to become a facilitator and teaching me what being a facilitator is all about.

Guess what? I passed the auditions, went through sessions of training and was facing the biggest challenge: facilitating my first camp.

The reward

I doubted myself at first. But with the support from DIODE friends and family, I managed to overcome these thoughts.

Personally, the most rewarding part of camp is watching the campers grow. It makes all the running around and late nights worth it.

I love to witness the campers’ growth journeys because I was once one of them. It’s gratifying to watch the shy ones speak up, the boisterous ones tone down, and the whole team work together to achieve something amazing.

The most beautiful part is seeing yourself transform into a better version. Because that is what being a M.A.D. agent is all about.

It’s about making a difference in the lives of others around you and the communities you live in.
Passion does not give excuses for the lack of experience. It takes risk and sometimes requires you to put your head on the line. It is not reliant on what others think, nor is it hindered by the disapproval of others. It sets its sights on a vision, and is the propelling factor that launches you into action.

Many people go through the motions of life feeling unfulfilled, simply because they are operating where their passion does not lie. Vision workers are always energetic because they have found the fire that lights them on in their journey. Have you found yours?

2. Purpose: Know The Why Behind The What

Passion, however, goes nowhere without purpose. If passion is the driving force behind the vision, then purpose is the direction towards the vision. They both go hand-in-hand.

American author and pastor, Thomas Dexter Jones, once said, “if you can’t figure out your purpose, figure out your passion. For passion will lead you right into your purpose.”

I believe that passion is most powerful when it is intertwined with purpose. Vision workers don’t just do things because they are told to do so; they do things because they really believe in them. They look beyond the duty and get straight to the heart of why they do what they do.

Vision workers are so saturated with purpose, to a point where they plan and act for the purpose of its purpose. It is important for us to go deeper and to get to the purpose of why we do what we do. Many times, the very things that used to excite us end up becoming a burden, simply because we have lost sight on the purpose or vision behind it.

One of the most effective ways that I personally use to reignite myself when I go through burnouts is to rediscover the vision behind the mission, the spirit behind the skill, and the heart behind the art.

3. Perseverance: finish the race

Having said all that, possessing the right passion and purpose won’t guarantee that the journey will be a bed of roses. Challenges and problems are still an inevitable part of life, and there will be days where we will feel like giving up and throwing in the towel.

This is where our purpose and passion are tested to the core, but I am always reminded of this quote by Friedrich Nietzsche which states, “He who has a why to live can bear almost any how.”

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Are You Leading The Life You Want?

By DORIE CLARK

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LIFE is all about trade-offs. You can’t have it all. That’s the conventional wisdom about work-life balance. But according to Stewart D. Friedman, Wharton School professor and author of Leading the Life You Want: Skills for Integrating Work and Life, we need to rethink those assumptions.

“The people who are most successful in terms of having a significant impact on the world are those who embrace other parts of their lives, rather than forsake them,” he says.

“That was the big motivating idea: to cut through the common wisdom that you have to give up everything in order to be successful.”

WORK-LIFE BALANCE VS WORK-LIFE INTEGRATION

In fact, even the term “work-life balance” needs to be overhauled, he says. The implication that we can (or should) perfectly balance our personal and professional lives all the time is faulty.

“It’s highly segmented, a kind of economic model that is based on the assumption that there’s a fixed sum of time or energy or attention and that it can only be divided up in so many ways,” he says.

Friedman rejects the implication that time spent working always takes away from other facets of one’s life (or vice versa).

“If you assume zero-sum,” he says, “if you’re your employer and I want balance, what that means is that I’m taking something from you.”

Instead, he prefers the term “work-life integration,” which better reflects his view that we can find win-win approaches if we search hard enough.

“The people who are most successful are those who figure out ways of bringing the different pieces together in ways that are mutually reinforcing,” he says.

“What I’ve seen is that if you’re smart about choosing what matters and who matters, if you’re being creative and continually learning about how to bring the pieces together, you can find room in your world to take steps that make things better in all the different parts of your life.”

We might assume our spouse is angry that we’re not home every night for dinner, but what they really want is more quality time on weekends.

FOUR-WAY WIN

This is what he calls a “four-way win,” which benefits your work, your family, your community, and your health (mind/body/spirit).

In Leading the Life You Want, he profiles top leaders — from Sheryl Sandberg to Michelle Obama, and Bruce Springsteen to former Bain & Company chief executive officer, Tom Tierney — and tells their stories, explaining how their choices enable them to thrive in multiple realms of their lives.

Friedman himself tries to build in four-way wins (or at least wins on multiple dimensions). For example, he invited his sons to help him choose the playlist for a recent Sirius XM radio appearance he was disc jockeying, in tribute to Springsteen’s inclusion in his book.

“It was just another way of connecting with them,” he says, as well as fulfilling a professional obligation to promote his book.

GETTING MORE WITH LESS

In a previous job at Ford Motor Company, Friedman also used innovative scheduling to ensure he’d be able to spend more time with his family, even while working at a very demanding job.

His first year on the job, when he moved his family to Michigan, he vowed, “I’m going to be home for breakfast and dinner.”

His behaviour was so unusual, word quickly spread. During a meeting in Germany, a European executive approached him. “Are you the guy who goes home for dinner every night? I heard about you.”

But the following year, his kids were homesick and wanted to return to the East Coast, so Friedman began commuting back and forth from Philadelphia. Instead of coming home for dinner every night, he’d now work gruelling hours during the week — often dining with his colleagues — and would instead spend weekends at home with his family.

“I was incredibly productive that year,” he recalls.

“There’s a lot of different solutions. You’ve just got to figure out what works for you in your circumstances.”

You likely will only find the right work-life integration through an iterative process.

STEPS TO ACHIEVE WORK-LIFE INTEGRATION

1. CLARITY

“If you’re looking to integrate your own work and life better,” says Friedman, “the first step is getting clear on what really matters to you — not what others say you should be doing. There’s a lot of different ways to live,” he says.

“You’ve got to find the one that’s right for you and try not to listen to all the social pressure, parental pressure, societal pressure.”

2. EXPECTATIONS

Next, find out what the people around you really do want or expect.

“It’s remarkable how little we truly know about what the people around us really need from us,” he observes.

We might assume our spouse is angry that we’re not home every night for dinner, but what they really want is more quality time on weekends.

“We won’t know unless we ask, and engage in a real conversation without making assumptions,” he says.

“You tell people, ‘You really matter to me and I want to strengthen our relationship and here’s some things that I think are most important to you — do I have it right?’, most people will be flattered. They’re going to feel closer to you. They’re going to be honoured and they’re going to tell you.”

3. TRIAL AND ERROR

Finally, he says, it’s important to experiment. You likely will only find the right work-life integration through an iterative process.

According to Friedman, “If you want to work from home one day a week and need to negotiate that with your boss, the concept of experiment is really important.”

“It’s a lot different for me to say to you, ‘Can we just try this for a few weeks and let’s see how it goes and if you’re not happy, we’ll try something different?’...as opposed to, ‘You are never going to see me on Fridays again because I’ve got to go to the soccer game for the rest of the year, and if I’m not there then I’m sorry and if you don’t like it, I’ll go to work for someone else’.

“So, it’s not me against you, it’s ‘Let’s try to find something that works for us.’”

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

How are you integrating your work and life?

Time seems to be the only element in the world that cannot be retrieved once it is lost. It is also a fair gift given to all of us. No matter how rich or how poor we are, from blue collar workers to senior managers of big or small organisations, we all have 24 hours in a day to spare — no more, no less. Check out these tips on how to manage time effectively.

bit.ly/2hrchxb

Friedman has comprehensive coaching and mentoring programmes to help individuals develop relational skills that build a strong mentor-mentee relationship.

Participants will also learn influential traits and qualities of successful mentors to create the right mentoring dynamics for a win-win relationship.

Find out more, email info@leaderonomics.com.

Dorie Clark is a marketing strategy consultant, professional speaker, and frequent contributor to the Harvard Business Review, TIME, and Entrepreneur. She is the author of ‘Reinventing You’ and ‘Stand Out’, which was named the No. 1 Leadership Book of 2015 by Inc. magazine and was a Washington Post bestseller. To share your thoughts on work-life integration, email us at editor@leaderonomics.com.
By TERRY SMALL
editor@leaderonomics.com

SILENCE is golden. This is especially true for your brain.
How often does your brain experience utter silence? It seems everywhere we go, there is noise, noise, and more noise.
Peace and quiet? Not so much. Science says silence is good for your brain, it’s important to seek it out.
Ester Schaller Buchholz, author of The Call of Solitude: Alonetime in a World of Attachment, rightly observed, “Others inspire us, information feeds us, practice improves our performance, but we need quiet time to figure things out, to emerge with new discoveries, to unearth original answers.
Indeed. Too much noise, all the time, is not good for your brain.
Consider this. Research from the World Health Organization and European Commission’s Joint Research Centre has linked noise pollution to increased stress, heart disease, sleep loss, high blood pressure, decreased motivation, increased error-making, and lower performance at work and school.
Your cognitive functions most affected by noise are: memory, problem solving, creativity, and reading focus.
Shhh… benefits of silence
Silence is more important to your brain than you might think. If you can carve out some quiet time in your day, you get these benefits:
• The growth of new brain cells in the hippocampus – the part of your brain that is associated with memory (according to an “accidental” discovery by Imke Kirste, a regenerative biologist at Duke University).
• Some much needed rest for your brain. A release from focused attention gives your brain a chance to recalibrate and self-reflect.
• A good work out for your memory. When there is complete silence, your brain’s cortex remains active and dynamic.
• A break from noise gives your brain a chance to relax, dial down the stress, do its job, and gives you a chance to immerse yourself into your surroundings.

“Go placidly amid the noise and the haste, and remember what peace there may be in silence.”
— Max Ehrmann, Desiderata (poem)

“If you can, be intentional about finding silence in your day. Maybe you could find a peaceful place in your neighbourhood and go for a walk. Make it a daily habit. Your brain might just thank you with your next great idea!”

Terry Small is a brain expert who resides in Canada and believes that anyone can learn how to learn easier, better, faster, and that learning to learn is the most important skill a person can acquire. To connect with Terry, write to him at editor@leaderonomics.com.

Online Feature
In an ever-changing VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous) world, intellectual capital, expertise and competencies are quickly becoming redundant. Discover how you can use learning as a strategic weapon to remain relevant. Read the article here: bit.ly/LearningWeapon

QUOTABLE QUOTES FOR YOUR BRAIN
Here are a couple of great quotes to keep in mind.

“Silence is a source of great strength.”
— Lao Tzu

“No country can ever truly flourish if it stifles the potential of its women and deprives itself of the contributions of half of its citizens. — Michelle Obama

Brain Break
Why silence is good for your brain

Have you ever reacted poorly to a difficult situation? More often than not, our bad reactions beget bad reactions from others. Dr Stan Amaladas talks to Leaderonomics CEO, Roshan Thiran regarding intentional leadership and how it can end damaging cycles. Watch here: bit.ly/SCintentional

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!
Are You Anxious? What employers can do about it

By LOUISA DEVADASON louisa.allycyn@leaderonomics.com

We currently live in a world that just doesn’t switch off. With so many apps, work and other responsibilities have a way of finding you – it is a sensory overload. It’s no surprise that this can overwhelm many. The National Health & Morbidity Survey 2015 reported that mental health concerns among adults had increased to 18% in just 10 years. The study found that these concerns were most prevalent among young adults and those from low-income households. The most common reported condition was anxiety – which affects 1 in 13 people globally.

Professor of Psychology and Psychiatry Emeritus at Boston University, David Barlow defines anxiety as “a future-oriented mood state in which one is not ready or prepared to attempt to cope with upcoming negative events”. When this feeling of impending doom intensifies, it can lead to debilitating panic attacks, gastrointestinal distress and more serious mental disorders as well as other physiological symptoms. A strong, resilient state of mental health wellbeing is pivotal to life satisfaction, social engagement, productivity as well as personal and professional excellence.

One of the reasons employees – particularly young professionals – experience distress is the friction and uncertainty that come with taking on a new role. This is often coupled with poor support systems and coping mechanisms that make employees spiral further down. So, what can leaders of organisations do to improve this issue?

1. Learn and understand what anxiety can be like for different people.
2. Create a safe space for sharing. It is not always realistic to expect employees to separate work and personal issues as they interplay and affect each other.
3. Collaborate with employees to create reasonable deadlines and effective processes.
4. Be supportive of employees seeking help.
5. Respect work-life balance.
6. Organise training for employees to learn how to support each other and resolve conflict better.

Creating a compassionate, personal environment at work is the most productive thing a leader can do for both the capacity-building of employees as well as creating an organisation that people want to be loyal to and be appreciated.

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