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Malaysia, Let’s Aim For World-Class Teams! What you need to be a winner

BY GOPI GANESALINGAM
editor@leaderonomics.com

WHEN I joined Malaysia Economic Development Corporation (MDEC) in February 2015, I took on the role, vice president of Enterprise Development. It was a new division created to identify and catalyse Malaysian-based companies into the global arena as international stage, starting with various corporate objectives, so my MDEC story moved through different chapters.

Currently, I am leading a team using MDEC’s GAIN (Global Accelerator and Innovation Acceleration) initiative to elevate Malaysian companies onto the international stage, starting with those in the ASEAN region. World-class ambitions demand a high-performance culture, which is a fast-emerging trend in many organisations.

Personally, I point to football teams (known as ‘soccer’ by Americans) as examples of some ‘secrets’ in what it takes to successfully develop and drive high-performing teams.

Success stories

Malaysia has already seen several inspiring success stories, moving in the right direction and gathering momentum. Just to run through a few:

• Vitrox Bhd is a global player in automated vision inspection solutions. It was founded by Chu Jenn Weng and Steven Siaw Kok Tong, both graduates from Universiti Sains Malaysia. Vitrox was first admitted to the ACE (for Access, Certainty, Efficiency) Market in 2005 and moved to the main market in 2009.

On March 19, 2018, their market capitalisation stood at over RM2.7bil.

• Aemulus Holdings Bhd is another listed Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) status company. Founded by Ng Sang Beng and Yeoh Chee Keong, it listed on the ACE Market of Bursa Malaysia in 2015. Ng and Yeoh were colleagues at Altera Corporation in Penang. Their market capitalisation stands at RM107mil.

• Other MSC-status champions include Immagine Group, now 16 years in operations, best known for their stock image business (123rf.com) and Piktochart, which produces visual stories from charts, better known as infographics.

• Green Packet Bhd is a Malaysian company that started out in Silicon Valley in 2000 and achieved listing in 2005. In true Silicon Valley style, they did not understand or need a basic product-based incentive payments, as customers were sold products without relying on large monetary incentives!

A high purpose generates powerful energies that will drive high performance: That is indeed the practice at MDEC, because working in MDEC is more than a job or a career, it’s about “serving the nation with your hand over your heart”.

A note for managers

Coming back to the issues faced by most managers who, after climbing up the corporate ladder, have a team to lead: It is often assumed that they have the skills to manage a team. In practice, that might not be the case.

A great salesman might not be a great sales team lead, where the job requires him to motivate, assist and sell for face-to-face people to perform. This is where mentoring and coaching is required.

The other point to understand is that in a team, there will be some who perform and others who don’t. If you have team members who are not contributors, they need to be removed quickly and in an open and visible manner.

Unfortunately, many line managers prefer to keep these staff on the payroll and avoid uncomfortable conversations.

When there is confusion about responsibilities, and no one is really held accountable for performance, managers will struggle to have open and fair conversations about an individual’s performance.

Without accountability, you cannot build a high-performing team.

“Well done!”

Managers who want to build high-performance teams need to really understand that.

If I could borrow again from football: All top Premier League teams are packed with talent and committed athletes.

The reality is that, at this level, you can’t build a winning team without a superstar.

Liverpool might have discovered one such star in Egyptian footballer Mohamed Salah, who joined 25 and joined the club in June 2017 from A.S. Roma. Past his leading, Sir Alex Ferguson (with Michael Moritz) said, “The two most powerful words in the English language are ‘Well done!’

“Much of leadership is about creating a team that is more than the sum of its parts, a team that cannot be replicated. The independent commissioner, Stephen Sedgwick said, “Some current practices carried an unacceptable risk of promoting behaviour, which is inconsistent with the interests of customers.”

In my earlier article, I talked about the need to have a strong story. If the story is clear and meaningful, and shows purpose, then you can actually recruit and motivate a team without relying on large monetary incentives!

In conclusion

In building a high-performance team, you need a powerful story, committed team members, a couple of superstars and an evaluation system that is fair and open.

What’s good for the goose is not always good for the gander: so rewards and expectations must be specific to each member.

Add to this a courageous leader and you will have a winner!
Small Steps Today, Significant Change Tomorrow

Don’t get too busy to work on your leadership skills

By ROSHAN THIRAN

THE reason I framed the question this way is because it encourages a major shift in the person’s perspective.

Now, they’re no longer thinking about any end goal and all the steps it might take to get there, which can be demotivating.

Instead, they’re thinking about what’s manageable now – this instant – that would help them to take the first step in the right direction.

I advised my friend that he should forget about the bigger picture for the moment. What could he do today to bring about a small, positive change?

“Well, I guess I could start by walking off 20 minutes each day for lunch, making sure I have no interruptions,” he said.

“That wouldn’t be so challenging, I suppose, and if I can manage that, then I could make additional small changes until they start adding up to bigger ones.”

As we develop greater self-awareness, we are in a much stronger position to understand and meet the needs of others around us.

Take small steps

If you’ve ever been overwhelmed, you’ll know that it’s difficult to focus on separating tasks into clear chunks of time.

Everything seems to come flooding in at once and the mind goes into survival mode – meaning that there’s little time to stop and think rationally about how you can go about managing your time efficiently.

Needless to say, practices such as mindfulness or cultivating empathy are great approaches that bring many benefits to our lives.

However, for many people, the reality is that they need something that works fast, an approach through which they can see immediate results and get back some sense of control.

Taking a minute to think about what small thing you can work on now can yield big results.

For a busy person, that small thing might just be taking 20 minutes out of each day that previously seemed impossible.

That small change is actually a huge step. Not only does it show that you’re committed to improving for your own sake and for others, but you’re also gaining control in a positive way that will automatically lead to more benefits as time goes on.

Instead of looking at the end goal, and aiming and arming at the next objective along the way empowers you to take the wheel and go a little further along the road each time.

Maybe a month’s worth of taking 20-minute lunch breaks leads to another step that sees you taking 30-minute lunch breaks with a colleague, twice a week.

From there, you get to know people better, which naturally increases your empathy and ability to connect with others.

Perhaps from that point as a leader, you get to know what issues are affecting people.

With that, you take steps to deal with each one of those issues effectively, which in turn boosts team morale, engagement and commitment to the organisation.

And it all started with that one decision to take a 20-minute break each day.

Inspire change slowly

You should never underestimate the power of taking small steps.

There’s always a temptation to aim high and go the extra mile.

If you can manage to do that, good on you – it’s great to be able to take giant leaps forward. On the other hand, there’s so much to be said for taking smaller steps when necessary.

Not only do they sustain our motivation as each step offers a small victory along the way, but they provide us with valuable insights into who we are.

As we develop greater self-awareness, we are in a much stronger position to understand and meet the needs of others around us.

In short, we become the great leaders we imagined ourselves to be.

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For more info and to register, email diode@leaderonomics.com or Whatsapp Nicholas at 017-2299288

Self mastery is an important tool that will help us on our way, in helping us to grow out of our comfort zones and drive us towards excellence.

Leaderonomics has several empowerment programmes that uncover self-mastery techniques to help you discover and maximise your potential, reach out to us through info@leaderonomics.com to learn more.

5 May 2018 | www.leaderonomics.com

Leaderonomics is a social enterprise working to transform lives through leadership development. Connect with Roshan on Facebook and Twitter for more insights into business, personal development, and leadership. What small steps do you need to take now to see a better change tomorrow? Share your thoughts with us at editor@leaderonomics.com.
Secrets Of Successful People
How they set goals and follow through

By MARSHALL GOLDSMITH
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T
HE typical advertisement or "infomercial" – designed to help people "get in shape" – provides a great example of what not to do in goal-setting. The message is almost always the same. For an "incredibly small" amount of money, you can buy a "revolutionary" product that is "unbelievably easy" and "fun to use." This product will produce "amazing results in almost no time" and you will "have the body that you always wanted". Most infomercials imply that you will not have to continue exercising and dieting for years, that you will continue to look young, and that you will have a wonderful life for the rest of your living years.

In reality, there is no "easy answer" – real change requires real effort. The "quick fix" is seldom a "meaningful fix." Distractions and competing responses are going to happen and the most successful people, and those who really want to be great, understand this. Below are three of the most important reasons why people give up on goals followed by a brief description of how successful people "do it differently" and are ultimately well-positioned to achieve their goals.

1. Ownership
One of the biggest mistakes in all of leadership development is the roll-out of programmes and initiatives with the promise that "this will make you better". A classic example is the performance appraisal process. Many companies change their performance appraisal forms on a regular basis. How much good does this usually do? None! These appraisal form changes just confuse people and are seen as annual exercises in futility. What companies don't want to face is the real problem – it is seldom the form – the real problem is the managers who lack either the courage or the discipline to make the appraisal process work.

The problem with the "this will make you better" approach is that the emphasis is on the "this" and not the "you". Rather than rely on the latest "programme", successful people have a high need for and reliance upon self-determination. They commit to the challenge, task or process that needs their efforts and make a plan to meet their goals. Because of this commitment, they are far more likely to achieve success.

2. Time
Most of us have a natural tendency to underestimate the time needed to reach targets. Everything seems to take longer than we think it should! When the time elapsed in working towards our goal does not meet our own goal expectations.

Successful people understand that there is a price for success — they will have to work hard to achieve their goals.

Conclusion
All of these messages may sound "tough", but they are real. Successful people are not afraid of challenging goals.

Did You Know?
Winston Churchill became the British prime minister at the age of 62, though he was constantly defeated in running for the role of a public officer.

Warren Buffet was rejected by Harvard Business School. Today, he is one of the world's richest and most successful businessmen.

For a list of 50 famous successful people who failed at first, check out this link: bit.ly/50failurestosuccess
I

But strategy is evolving
Clayton Christensen: that we pick the
structures.
choose promising industries.
his economic theories and business
strategy is about making big choices.
has been premised on the idea that
accelerate its growth rate.
your company’s aversion to risk, help
yesterday doesn’t.
USD50bil company I worked with
embrace it.
inspiration. This is basic math.
create a predictable return.
principle of diversification.
understand the simple mathematical
Amazon, Google, Tesla/SpaceX – are
world, companies that are winning –

The Math behind big thinking

By DR KAIHAN Krippendorff
editor@leaderonomics.com

I

If you are thinking this is a
motivation piece about the power
of ambitious thinking, it’s not.
What I’m going to lay out here has
nothing to do with psychology or
inspiration. This is basic math.
A concept so simple, you will grow
frustrated that your company doesn’t
embrace it.
My 12-year-old gets it. But the
USD50bil company I worked with
doesn’t.
This simple idea could overcome
your company’s aversion to risk, help
them see failure as learning, and
accelerate its growth rate.
For the last 50 years, strategy
has been premised on the idea that
strategy is about making big choices.
Who do we serve? What do we
produce?
American academic known for
his economic theories and business
strategy Michael Porter advises us
choose promising industries.
Good to Great author Jim Collins: that we build the right organisational
structures.
Harvard Business School professor
Clayton Christensen: that we pick the
right customer segments.
Your growth strategy, then,
becomes a collection of big decisions.

But strategy is evolving
In today’s faster-paced, more agile
world, companies that are winning –
Amazon, Google, Tesla/SpaceX – are
operating at a higher order. They
understand the simple mathematical
principle of diversification.
Investors live by this principle.
If you spread your money across a
variety of risky investments, you can
create a predictable return.
While some investments fail, others
pop. The average results can be
stable even if the individual results
are erratic.
This is why smart investors
assemble portfolios of investments,
instead of funneling all of their capital
into just one stock or bond.
Yet most companies fail to apply
this simple principle to their growth
agendas. They assess each growth
idea individually.
Taking each opportunity – each
new product, new channel, new
customer segment – they assess
whether it’s risk-adjusted return fits
what the company wishes to deliver.
As a result, they only pursue
growth ideas with a comfortable level
of safety.
They grow risk averse because few
new, innovative ideas promise the
level of predictability that their core
business can.
New ideas carry risk. To remove
that risk, most companies simply kill
off new ideas.

Diversify your risks
A smarter option is to take more
risks, not fewer, while measuring the
diversified return of those risks. Jeff
Bezos said it best:
“Given a 10% chance of a 100
times payoff, you should take
that bet every time. But you’re
still going to be wrong 9 times
out of 10.”
“We all know that if you swing
for the fences, you’re going to
strike out a lot, but you’re
also going to hit some home
runs. The difference between
baseball and business, however,
is that baseball has a truncated
outcome distribution.
“When you swing, no matter
how well you connect with the
ball, the most runs you can get is
four.
“In business, every once in a
while, when you step up to the
plate, you can score 1,000 runs.
This long-tailed distribution of
returns is why it’s important to
be bold.
“Big winners pay for so many experiments.”
The key to applying this
diversification rule to accelerate
your growth is to change your unit
of measurement.
Stop judging teams by the success
or failure of their individual projects.
Instead, give them a portfolio of
ideas, and judge them by the return
of their portfolio.
Let’s say you have five ideas for
building new businesses with data.
Don’t pick just one and hope it
works. Pursue all five, understanding
that some will fail while others will
take off.
Don’t assemble your team around
one idea, organise them around a
portfolio of ideas.

In other words, think bigger
Think in groups of ideas rather than
individual ideas.
But what if your budget only allows
you to pursue one idea?
In that case, you have two choices.
You could pick just one, as most
companies do.

Or, a better choice, you could
conduct less-expensive experiments
that will bring down the cost of each
idea by 80%.
Instead of taking your USD5 and
betting it on one stock, put USD1
each into the five stocks in your
portfolio.
New agile experimentation
techniques make this easy.
Read Sprint: How to Solve Big
Problems and Test New Ideas in Just
Five Days by the Google Ventures folks,
Scrum: The Art of Doing Twice the
Work in Half the Time by Jeff Sutherland,
or The Start-Up Owner’s Manual: The
Step-by-Step Guide for Building a Great
Company by Steve Blank and Bob
Dorf, and you will quickly understand
how to do it.

Bundle your ideas
Now your bosses may want to hear
your idea, while you know you need
to pitch them a portfolio of ideas.
Getting their heads around this
diversification concept may take more
time and effort than you think. So
instead, simply trick the system.
Put the bundle of ideas into one
group and give the group a name.
Call it a multi-prong strategy or call
it a concept.
Take your five ideas for generating
growth from data and call it “Data
Services”.
Take your five designs for new
shoes and call it the “Shoe of the
Future Project”.
1. Pick five ideas.
2. Bundle them together into one
project.
3. Give the project a name.
4. Assemble an idea.
5. Run five inexpensive
experiments.
6. Drop what fails and advance
what works.

Almost everything we
do in today’s business world involves one risk
or another. Customer habits change, new
competitors appear, markets get saturated
and strategies fail.
Formal risk analysis can help you assess
the risk factors and suggest solutions to
minimise disruptions to
your business plans. It will also help
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apply to control risks are cost-effective.
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Formal risk analysis

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Artificial Intelligence

Is it good news or bad news for leaders?

BY SASHE KANAPATHI
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I recently watched a documentary about AlphaGo – a software developed by DeepMind, the artificial intelligence (AI) arm of Google’s parent company, Alphabet Group – that defeated the best Go player in the world.

For those who are unaware, as a game, Go is much more complex than chess and it was considered a pinnacle achievement for AI to beat a human player at it.

(Go is a two-player strategy board game in which the goal is to surround more territory than your opponent.)

In 2017, AI was used to beat human players at Texas Hold’Em Poker, a game similar to traditional poker but with slightly different rules to minimise the role of luck.

The game pushes AI to move beyond predictions of discrete moves into a realm of understanding human tactics.

We know that AI is going to revolutionise the way we work, where some of our work may be replaced by robots.

This led me to a pertinent question: How does AI affect leadership?

The journey to an AI-enabled world

There are many articles about competencies necessary for leaders to survive the new digital world of Industry 4.0.

From curiosity and agility to increased learning abilities, there are definite lists of recommended competencies to face the future. While these competencies help us deal with the changing world, they are more focused on changes around business models and processes.

But what would the future look like when AI is doing most of our jobs? What would leadership look like?

Can robots lead people? Or can a human leader lead a group of robots?

The future for humans

My curiosity led me to the site willrobotstakemyjob.com.

It’s a site that calculates the likelihood of your job being replaced by a robot, based on industry research from 2013.

Though outdated, it provided some insight into my questions.

It was interesting to find that a manager’s role is not necessarily removed from risk.

However, if you are a human resources manager, there is only a 0.55% chance (almost no chance) that your job will be taken over by a robot.

I began to see a trend – people jobs are still protected.

Only those in operational or functional areas of people manager jobs are at risk. Here, you might not even need people.

Naturally, if robots are doing a job, what you need are functional people to “control” the robots. There is no need for “leadership”.

So, what are jobs that we still need leadership skills for?

Obviously, it would be in areas where there is still a need for people.

For example, people who are “controlling” the robots as mentioned earlier.

It will take a long time to transform the world. Even when it does, technology should be used to make us better.

Similar to electricity, mechanisation and the internet, technology (or robots specifically) will change the way we work and make us more productive (hopefully).

Technological singularity?

In the worst case scenario, AI may completely master the soft skills required to be a competent leader and become human-like.

This is a popular view, perpetuated by movies like The Terminator or the Black Mirror series.

The fact that we are concerned about these things shows that we are aware of some of the broader lines between what is acceptable and what isn’t.

In an extreme case, if AI does become human-like, does that not mean leading these robots would also require the same leadership skills that we use to lead humans?

Conclusion

Ultimately, leadership is contextual and this is why I think AI has a long way to go.

For the same reasons that leadership development is a challenge in organisations today – and that there is no secret sauce which you can replicate across organisations – I think AI will struggle with the contextual nature of leadership.

As can be seen by the success of AI at beating humans in games like Go or Texas Hold’Em, AI today is used to analyse discrete points of data (not soft skills).

Taking the next step of understanding human behaviour and replicating human decision-making is a whole new frontier – more suited for AI to assist human leaders rather than to replace them.

In the meantime, I will keep an eye out and let you know when it’s time to worry about losing jobs related to leading people.
The Role of Emotional Intelligence in AI
The one thing holding chatbots back from being truly valuable to marketers

By YAZIN AKKAWI
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TEXTING and chatting have become so ingrained in our daily lives that, these days, most people get genuinely upset when they receive phone calls.

The convenience of mobile communication has made us greedy about our time, and spending minutes on the phone for something that can be accomplished via text has become just downright offensive.

For that reason, marketers are now turning to messaging platforms to improve communication channels for sales and customer service conversations.

In fact, a report by Twillo found that 9 out of 10 consumers want to use messaging to communicate with brands.

"[The] report highlights a growing divide between consumers and brands," said Manav Khurana, vice-president of product marketing at Twilio.

"Consumers message more than they call, email or even post on social media but businesses are still trying to reach them via the channels they no longer use. To keep up with consumers, brands must adopt messaging as a channel and begin communicating with customers in the same way people communicate with each other."

As a result, chatbots have become one of the hottest marketing tools in 2017, helping marketers not only reach their audience but do it at scale.

Companies like United Airlines, Pizza Hut, Denny’s Diner, Focus Features, and Patrón, just to name a few, have implemented bots on social media to field customer service issues or help consumers seek information more quickly.

United Airlines, for instance, has a chatbot called AutoPilot for looking up your flight status without having to leave Facebook or Twitter.

But not so fast, marketers – if the lightbulb for a bot idea has just gone off, you might need to think twice.

The rise of emotional messaging
Chatbots work great for simple or transactional requests because they remove the boundaries of different apps and websites.

But with chatbots, what we gain in convenience, we lose in emotion, especially in a time where expressive communication is more important than ever.

According to a survey by Tenor, the world’s largest graphics interchange format (GIF) sharing platform, there is an increasing amount of texters that expect better ways to express emotion.

The survey found that 7 in 10 Americans use visual expressions such as emojis, stickers or GIFs when texting.

What’s more, the survey also found that texters are using GIFs and emojis to express a robust range of emotions in messaging:

• Roughly half use them to “lighten the mood”.
• Roughly a quarter use them to show support and empathy.
• 28% of women use them to express frustration – compared to 16% of men.
• 26% of women use them to express anger – compared to 17% of men.
• The overwhelming shift to visual communication is a direct result of our mobile lifestyles and the increasingly important role of messaging, driven by massive smartphone adoption worldwide,” said David McIntosh, chief executive officer of Tenor, when asked about the growth in GIF usage.

"Ninety per cent of GIF searches centre on emotion."

What McIntosh continued to iterate is that, despite the speed in which we’re able to message these days, emotional and visual communication have still prevailed.

It’s why we’ve invented acronyms such as “OMG” and “LOL” which have evolved into GIFs and emojis.

Thanks to companies like Tenor, we’re able to visually communicate emotion without compromising speed.

That said, the increasing tendency to communicate emotionally has revealed a significant drawback to deploying chatbots, especially in customer service.

Emotional intelligence in customer service
If there’s one thing we all know about our experience with customer service agents, whether it’s with a real person or automated, it’s that most of the time we’re feeling frustrated, angry or impatient.

While quick, automated responses might be nice for casual information seeking, customer service calls are usually high-stakes situations, given the likely context that someone is having an issue that needs to be resolved.

In those situations, emotional intelligence is arguably the most important trait in customer service interactions.

The goal of customer service, at its core, is to make sure that the customer is not just satisfied but pleased to do business with you.

That would be incredibly difficult without the ability to manage and regulate your own emotions, while empathising with others and adjusting to their emotional state.

There are three specific situations where emotional intelligence is required for a successful outcome:

1. Dealing with anger and impatience
If an agent is interacting with an angry or displeased customer, the conflict may escalate if the customer does not sense compassion and understanding.

2. Dealing with disappointment and frustration
If an agent is fielding complaints from a disappointed or frustrated customer, they can turn complaints into compliments by sympathising with them and reassuring them that a solution will be found.

3. Dealing with surprise, happiness and gratitude
If an agent succeeds and the interaction results in positivity, they can adapt their mindset to shift to a more conversational tone, smiling or joking to further earn the trust of the customer.

These customer touch points carry so much weight that a bad experience can permanently damage their perception of the brand.

These are the human experiences that serve as the foundation of both emotional and visual communication.

Emotional intelligence is arguably the most important trait in customer service interactions.

The trillion dollar problem
The booming growth of machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI) has arguably more potential of being transformational than any other innovation we’ve ever seen.

In fact, it has the potential to be so valuable that billionaire American businessman Mark Cuban, predicts the world’s first trillionaires will actually be entrepreneurs working with AI.

For now, chatbots are becoming good at mimicking our language. But until they can detect our emotional states before deciding to deploy a bot.

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For now, chatbots are becoming good at mimicking our language. But until they can detect our emotional states before deciding to deploy a bot.
HR And Automation

Into the future: Job displacement vs unemployment

By BERNARD MARR
editor@leaderonomics.com

Robots are Coming For Our Jobs
- Huffington Post

Robots will destroy our jobs – and we’re not ready for it
- The Guardian

Robots taking human jobs is causing a ‘hellscape’
- Daily Mail

These headlines may seem over the top, but, like the scariest nightmare, they’re rooted in reality.

From factory line jobs to professions like accounting and medicine, artificial intelligence (AI) technologies mean that more and more tasks can now be automated and completed by machines or algorithms.

A recent report by think tank Centre for Cities estimates that by 2030, one in five – or 3.6 million – British jobs will probably be “displaced” by automation and globalisation.

According to the report, occupations that involve largely routine tasks are at a higher risk of decline, and the sectors most at risk are warehousing, customer service and retail.

So, there’s no doubt that automation will affect human jobs.

But is it all doom and gloom? And how will this increasing automation affect the human resource (HR) teams of the future?

Automation = opportunities

It sounds a dismal statistic, doesn’t it, one in five jobs?

However, the Centre for Cities paints a surprisingly positive picture, saying that, despite the probability of job losses, there will be an overall increase in jobs by 2030.

In particular, jobs that require cognitive and interpersonal skills are set to grow.

It’s the use of the word “displaced” that I find most telling.

Rather than being rendered unemployed by robots, the jobs humans do will shift, evolve and change.

The report points out that Britain’s cities have been coping with automation and globalisation for more than 100 years and almost all of our cities have seen the number of jobs grow during that period.

The emergence of new sectors – as a direct result of automation, technology, AI, etc – will lead to new roles that currently don’t exist.

Therefore, new jobs – job we can’t even imagine yet – will arise to replace those that are lost to technology.

If you think this is overly optimistic, remember that there were no such things as social media managers or app developers 15 years ago.

“Automation and globalisation will boost jobs in British cities over the coming decades,” Centre for Cities says.

How will HR change?

In its annual HR survey, recruitment firm Harvey Nash, concluded that AI and automation will have a major impact on HR over the next five years.

The survey found that 16% of HR leaders were already affected by AI and automation, while 40% think it will impact them in the next two to five years.

Looking further ahead, an Oxford University study concluded that, by 2035, HR administrative jobs had a 90% chance of being automated.

What does this automation mean in practice?

One good example is virtual helpdesk agents – chatbots – that could answer simple employee questions such as “When is the company closed over the Christmas break?” or “How much of my annual leave have I used this year?”

Chatbots are becoming increasingly common in our everyday lives.

Many large brands are already using chatbots to interact with customers.

For example, eBay’s ShopBot helps shoppers find and buy eBay items from within Facebook’s Messenger app.

So, as we become more and more used to interacting with chatbots in everyday life, we can expect to see greater use of chatbots in the workplace.

Plus, as our workplaces become more geographically dispersed, and the number of remote workers continues to rise, chatbots can fulfill a vital need for employees who don’t have easy access to HR colleagues.

AI technology is now so sophisticated that it can respond to natural, spoken language, rather than typed questions, and even detect the underlying sentiment behind the words themselves.

Call centres, for example, are using this technology to analyse whether a caller is satisfied, frustrated or angry during the course of their call.

Intelligent assistants can also play a role in talent acquisition, from scheduling interviews to supporting (or even making) decisions about applicants.

Talla is one example of a chatbot that’s designed to serve as a real-time advisor to HR professionals as they source new hires.

It provides a set of interview questions based on the role being recruited for and even conducts a Net Promoter Score survey following the recruitment process.

So, it’s clear that HR will be affected by automation over the next few years.

However, just as with the wider jobs market, this should be seen as a positive development.

Automating the simpler, administrative-type tasks frees up HR professionals to focus on more important tasks that deliver greater value to the business – tasks that robots and algorithms can’t complete.

HR to prepare for what lies ahead

One critical point from the Centre for Cities report is that greater investment is needed to help workers adapt to the changing nature of work.

People and businesses need help preparing for the changes that are coming, and I see HR as being central to fulfilling this need.

HR professionals must therefore develop a thorough understanding of the issues around automation if they’re to answer key questions like, “What type of people does the business need to work with these automated systems?” or ‘What skills should I be developing to future-proof my career?’

With the wealth of data available to modern HR teams, HR is ideally placed to answer such questions and support both the organisation and its people through the coming changes.
The Not-To-Do List
What you don’t do matters most

By MINDA ZETLIN
editor@leaderonomics.com

Do you have a to-do list? Of course – most of us do. But what about a not-to-do list? It turns out that it’s equally as important, according to productivity experts.

What exactly is a not-to-do list? It’s not a list of bad habits you’re determined to break or negative behaviour you want to avoid. It’s a list of tasks that you might think you should do, or might want to do, or might be asked to do by someone else.

But because these tasks don’t move you towards any of your larger objectives, don’t feed your soul, and aren’t necessary for you to do, you should either be left undone or you should delegate them to someone else.

The most successful people I know say that great careers arise out of what you say “no” to. It makes sense because time and energy are limited resources for each of us, and how we choose to spend your long-term goals and vision.

Successful people take time to identify and prioritize their goals, and then use their limited resources to focus on what really matters.

In this article, I’ll share some tips on how to create a not-to-do list, which will help you identify and prioritize your time and energy.

Here’s how to get started:

1. Assemble a general list of candidates for your not-to-do list.

   If you track how you spend your time (which is well worth doing), review your records to see what tasks you’re spending time on each day. Look at your calendar and notes you may have that will shed light on exactly how you spend your work time.

   Anything you’re spending time on that doesn’t directly align with your long-term goals and vision for yourself should definitely be a candidate.

   Likewise, so should items that have been on your to-do list for a long time, nagging at you, but that you have yet to accomplish.

   Things that other people ask you to do should go on the list of potential candidates, unless they move you towards your own goals.

   Any task that makes your heart sink just thinking about it should be a candidate for your not-to-do list.

2. Ask yourself some questions.

   Once you’ve got your potential candidates for the not-to-do list, challenge each of them with a few questions.

   First ask:

   “Will this task help me accomplish my goals and contribute to my vision of success?”

   If the answer is no, follow up by asking:

   “Will I or anyone else suffer meaningful negative consequences if this task doesn’t get done?”

   If the answer is no, that task should go on your not-to-do list.

   If something does seem urgent or important or could have negative consequences if it goes undone, ask yourself this:

   “Do I have to be the one to do this task?”

   “Could I give it to someone else by delegating or outsourcing it?”

   If there’s any way to give this task to someone else, it should go on your not-to-do list.

3. Prepare some answers.

   The whole point of the not-to-do list is so that you will be willing and able to quickly say ‘no’ to tasks that don’t fit your long-term goals and don’t need to be done by you.

   As new tasks are added to your not-to-do list, it’s useful to be ready with some quick answers in case anyone (including yourself) asks you to do something that doesn’t fit in with your mission.

   Life coach, Blad Kos, suggests actually preparing boilerplate text that you can quickly grab and drop into an email if you want to politely decline a request.

   You may want to write scripts you can use in person or over the phone. You should also be prepared with some things to tell yourself whenever a non-essential task rears its ugly head.

4. Repeat.

   As you’re invited to take on new tasks, or as you come up with new ideas that you want to pursue, test each one against the questions mentioned earlier.

   Does it meet the very stringent criteria to be placed on your to-do list, or does it belong on your not-to-do list?

   Be vigilant about protecting your own time and energy and use your boilerplate or script to turn down tasks as needed.

   Review your not-to-do list periodically – at least once a quarter, Kos suggests. As you get the hang of it, you may want to add more items to the list.

   Who knows? Maybe someday, your not-to-do list will be longer than your to-do list.
How To Make Better, Informed Decisions
Want to stay competitive? Then start making strong choices quickly.

Kevin Kruse is a New York Times bestselling author, the founder of The Kruse Organization Consulting and co-author of ‘Building Trust and Productive Leadership’. He is the founder of The Kruse Group. To engage with him, email us at editor@leaderonomics.com for more details.

OW can your company make better, faster decisions? The key difference between a company that stays on the cutting edge and one that fades away always boils down to one thing: Decisions. Every department or business unit has its own priorities and expertise, and most organisations make decisions with a consensus building process. While it seems natural to try to get everyone on board, it often elicits debates and sub-optimise the solution. If you truly want to be world-class, you must go through these four areas in your department to make decisions with a consensus building process.

1. Know your goals

As Kates explains it: “... one role of the leader is to realign your goals.” Do this by acknowledging, but not dwelling on, the pressure of consensus. It means that you’re accountable for any leaders or business owners, but by trusting your employees, you are effectively speeding up the process.

2. Start to let go

In the end, it’s all about trust. To trust in one another, let go, and say, “Look, you make the decision unless there’s these issues that involve me; otherwise I trust you to make a good decision.”

3. Give the ‘golden vote’

One person has to make the choice and accept responsibility; perhaps the head of the department most likely to execute the decision. As Kates explains it: “... one role of the leader is to realign your goals.” It means that you’re accountable for the quality of the decision. For bringing the right voice to the right data, and making sure there’s a candid conversation.

“So in order to reach agreement, what happens is the group tends to sub-optimise the solution.” By having multiple people cut down solutions for not being the best fit and actually making very good ideas can often end up on the cutting room floor. This means everyone will put in their two cents on how choices will affect their own work.

The agreement trap

Start-ups and younger companies are especially prone to falling into the agreement trap. In an attempt to be democratic, they end up wasting time, effort, and often capital, so everyone can feel comfortable with their decision, instead of making a strong (if not all that popular) choice. It’s extremely important to bridge these departments to inspire a more communal focus. She broke it down further: “Companies that make better and faster decisions than their competition, win.”

So what can be done?

To speed up good decisions, the best thing you can do is stop trying to get everyone to unanimously agree on something, and instead “focus on structured collaboration”.

The agreement trap

Start-ups and younger companies are especially prone to falling into the agreement trap. In an attempt to be democratic, they end up wasting time, effort, and often capital, so everyone can feel comfortable with their decision, instead of making a strong (if not all that popular) choice.

Kates warns that while consensus seems collaborative on the surface, it often elicits debates and brainstorming sessions instead of a targeted solution. Department heads enter into decision-making with one thing in mind: voice your opinion and advocate for the smartest decision. However, this creates an environment where everyone is tying for the decision that best suits their own needs.

The difference is subtle, but debilitating: “Consensus means we all must have a veto,” Kates explains. “So in order to reach agreement, what happens is the group tends to sub-optimise the solution.”

So, what can we do to start coming to decisions more quickly without becoming tangled in the search for agreement?

1. Know your goals

Kates’ strongest recommendation is to realign your goals.

Your organisation trying to come to a concrete and final decision? Then reaching interdepartmental agreement should not be your top priority.

When department heads come together for a meeting, they are coming armed with their own issues and gripes. This should be acknowledged, but not dwelled on. First and foremost, you should outline the nature of your meeting: if it’s the make a decision, then release the pressure of consensus.

Embrace different perspectives but understand that there is no silver bullet solution to any problem.

2. Start to let go

In the end, it’s all about trust. To trust in one another, let go, and say, “Look, you make the decision unless there’s these issues that involve me; otherwise I trust you to make a good decision.”

This may be a particularly painful pill to swallow for any leaders or business owners, but by trusting your employees, you are effectively speeding up the process.

3. Give the ‘golden vote’

One person has to make the choice and accept responsibility; perhaps the head of the department most likely to execute the decision. As Kates explains it: “... one role of the leader is to realign your goals.” It means that you’re accountable for the quality of the decision. For bringing the right voice to the right data, and making sure there’s a candid conversation.

And at the end of the day, if we can’t find a decision to align to, you make a well-informed call and we move to execution.”

Everything is in a crazy, busy mode almost all the time but how do you get everyone to unanimously agree on something, and instead “focus on structured collaboration”.

The agreement trap

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By Kevin Kruse

Based on ‘Building Trust and Productive Leadership’ by Kevin Kruse. For more information, please visit leaderonomics.com.
Time Management Begins With Self-Management

By DAN ROCKWELL
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THERE is no such thing as time management. Time can’t be managed. It simply is. Nothing you do changes time. Time management is really self-management. Everyone who has trouble managing time is in reality, struggling with self-management.

Reasons you can’t manage yourself
1. You let others run your schedule.
   Being responsive to others may turn into giving others control of the way you use time*. Misconceptions about compassion and kindness can destroy productivity.
2. You need clarity and commitment regarding mission, vision and purpose.
   You need to know why you’re here before you can effectively manage your schedule.
3. You don’t know how to best use your time.

The #1 thing that most improved my productivity
Protect open time on your calendar.
Open time on your calendar is your most precious resource.
When someone calls for an appointment, schedule it during busy times, not open time.

What if?
What if team members can put appointments on your calendar? Have a “calendar conversation” with your team. Agree that everyone has the authority to protect two or three blocks of time on their calendar.
Depending on your organisation, it might be a two-hour block of time on Monday and Thursday.
Protected time is sacred. It’s your time to get real work done.
Everyone agrees that you have permission to close your door, put your phone on phone mail and not respond to emails during protected time.
What has helped you become more productive?

*Note: Some jobs require you to let others run your schedule. If you’re in emergency services, for example, you don’t get to choose when a house catches on fire.
Everyone who commits to respond to others must navigate tensions between controlling your own schedule and being responsive.

Some people call this artificial intelligence, but the reality is this technology will enhance us. So instead of artificial intelligence, I think we’ll augment our intelligence.

Ginni Rometty, CEO of IBM

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Do you dread team building activities because you’re not much of an outdoor person? Well, now you can have those sessions in the kitchen! See how a kitchen shift can teach us the importance of communication by heading to bit.ly/CCTeamBuilding to read more.

Marie Curie’s work revolutionised the fields of science and medicine, which led to her becoming the first woman to win a Nobel Prize twice. Leaderonomics’ CEO Roshan Thiran shares with us the lessons we can take away from the Mother of Modern Physics. Listen to the podcast here: bit.ly/RYGMarieCurie

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Social Media Branding Missteps
Don’t you want your customers to fall in love with your brand?

BY DEBBIE O’CONNOR
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FOR most businesses, social media is the cheapest way of getting your products or services in front of the masses for a small investment of your time.

Unfortunately, significant damage can be done to your brand if you don’t have a planned approach to social media.

The saying ‘something is better than nothing’ doesn’t apply when trying to build a brand that customers will fall in love with.

Mistake #1: No plan
To avoid brand damage on social media, you need to decide:

• The platforms you should be on (and the answer is never ‘all of them’).
• What do you want your social media to say about your business?
• Your goal: Is it brand recognition? Sales? Or perhaps engagement?

Once that’s clear, write a plan that outlines what you’re going to post, how often, and by whom, as well as visual concepts for what it should look like.

Mistake #2: The wrong brand culture
What are you actually posting on social media?

Are you constantly in sales mode?

Are you sharing inappropriate images or videos of your staff hitting the town (and perhaps the pavement) on a big night out?

And do you have a strategy in place for managing comments or negativity?

Look at the brands you love to follow. Watch how they engage their customers.

Having a good balance between educating, engaging and entertaining your followers is essential in the cluttered world of social media.

Mistake #3: No brand voice
Whether you realise it or not, how you write and talk creates a particular brand voice for your business.

Are you fun, playful and hip?

Perhaps you’re intelligent, witty or intellectual?

Your social media posts should reflect the tone and language you’d like your brand to have.

Create a list of words or guidelines that staff can refer to, this will ensure the brand voice is consistent across your platforms.

Mistake #4: No brand experience
Creating a brand experience is essential in the clutered world of social overwhelm.

Why do you think cat and dog videos are so popular?

It’s because they allow us a moment to relax, be entertained and have a chuckle. They provide a viewer experience.

Include an opportunity to create a brand experience for your fans in your plan – something that they will remember or, even better, pass onto their friends.

For us, we like to do logo votes.

We encourage our followers to vote on the best of three logos that we’ve developed for a client.

Everyone likes to be asked their opinion, so we receive plenty of comments, suggestions and even critiques, but it’s worthwhile as people not only remember that we design logos, but they’ve also been engaged in the process.

Mistake #5: Inconsistency
Inconsistency refers to everything about your brand across all social media platforms.

Your colours, fonts, style of images, brand voice, use of video, music, live streaming, hash tags, and the list goes on.

Are these consistent across all the different platforms that you use?

Is the message that you send on Instagram consistent with the message on Facebook or Twitter?

This isn’t just about what you post, it’s about the styling of your social media, too.

And most of all, is the transition from one platform to another a seamless brand experience?

Without realising it, too many businesses unwittingly damage their brand by not being strategic with their social media.

Yes, social media is social by nature and very much about engagement.

But it’s also a digital representation of your business, and needs to be managed in the same manner as you would manage any other facet of your marketing.

Is your social media building a brand that customers are falling in love with?