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TRANSFORMING LEADERS FROM COMPLIANCE INTO COMMITMENT

By MARK SANBORN
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G

VERY leader yearns for a team that rises above merely “going through the motions” to get the job done. The dream is a team that distinguishes itself by its excellence, a team that displays enthusiasm, innovation, and a sense of ownership. The question, of course, is how to lead a team to that place of self-motivated brilliance.

Getting your team from where it is now to where you would like it to be might seem like a quantum leap. The first step is grasping a solid understanding of the difference between compliance and commitment.

COMPLIANCE: DOING JUST ENOUGH

Let’s start with compliance. Compliance is something you probably do every day.

Some businesses, especially with a legal or human resources department, deal with compliance issues on a daily basis. It’s a matter of following regulations and rules to avoid trouble.

You probably practise compliance when you get into your car. You follow traffic rules about stopping and starting, turning left and right, and going forward or backward. Even though the speed limit is not always where you would personally set it, you know you must obey the law or face the consequences.

Compliance has its benefits. People stay safe if they follow the rules. Generally, we all know what to expect from other drivers on the road because they follow the rules.

Compliance is great about keeping order. Compliance is all about doing what you are supposed to do, in order to avoid unpleasant results.

It’s pretty easy to get compliance – all you have to do is outline the penalties for breaking the rules, and most of your team will comply.

They will show up on time; they will turn in their work; they will respect deadlines; they will follow the rules. It looks at results rather than reasons.

THE TRANSITION

So, how do you move a team from compliance to commitment? It takes more than just delivering a rousing speech or waving a battle flag. It takes more than just a carrot or a stick.

The process, the results, and the legacy that are left behind will drive you to recreate the atmosphere of commitment with every team you lead from that point forward.

Commitment requires more honour, more devotion, more honesty, and more courage than compliance – but it produces a team that accomplishes more than they ever imagined.

A great leader must take the time to help each team member identify their goals, and the motivation they will need to reach them.

A great leader provides the example, support, and resources a team needs to stay the course. Commitment takes more time and energy than compliance. It requires a leader to demonstrate commitment to the team and to each member’s success. It requires a sense of ownership, of purpose, and of steadfast determination on the part of a leader. It requires accountability – did you do what you said you would do? It looks at results rather than reasons.

Commitment requires more honour, more devotion, more honesty, and more courage than compliance – but it produces a team that accomplishes more than they ever imagined.

Working with a team that demonstrates true commitment will spoil you forever for working with mere compliance.
LOOSEN YOUR GRIP

SUCCESS IN LEADERSHIP IS MAKING SURE YOU’RE NOT GRIPPING THE HANDLEBARS TOO TIGHTLY

By ROSHAN THIRAN

The classic book Zen in the Art of Archery, the Master advises, “What stands in your way is that you have a much too wilful will. You think that what you do not do yourself does not happen.”

Written by the German philosopher Eugen Herrigel, the book explores how motor learning is done, which is to say that much of our learning is acquired unconsciously. This idea ran contrary to the Western ideal that everything we do comes from control and intentional direction. But anyone who learned to ride a bike will know that gripping the handlebars too tightly and making rash turns is a sure recipe for disaster.

Becoming an expert cyclist starts to unfold only when we learn to ‘let go’ of trying to control so much. Rather than making the bicycle move, we move with it, almost as though we become part of the bicycle.

Mastering this stage, we usually find we fall off a lot less than before. Whenever we want to succeed at something, there’s a good chance that we will try to control as much as we can to minimise the risk of failure. But just as gripping too tightly on the handlebars is likely to lead to bashed knees and bruised egos, trying to control too much in positions of leadership is also bound to lead to problems.

These days, we can all look to one or two examples of leaders who try to control everything and react rashly whenever things don’t pan out quite as well as they planned. At best, bullish leaders can inflict unnecessary inconveniences on those around them; in the worst-case scenario, attempts to control things too tightly can result in major problems that affect many people.

Like everything else, leadership evolves with time and we’re constantly discovering new insights into how leaders can be more effective, efficient, engaging and empowering.

Having said that, even the best advice received isn’t always the advice that’s taken, and it’s often the case that leaders with rigid styles only receive the message through unwelcome results.

Here, I’d love to share three insights from my own leadership journey on how to get the best out of yourself and others

1 SEEK INPUT FROM OTHERS

An old mentor of mine once said: “I know more about what I do than you do – but there’s an awful lot more you know that I don’t.”

While leaders often have more knowledge about a particular subject than their followers, there’s a lot of knowledge they have yet to acquire – the kind of knowledge that others around them hold.

For example, a leader might be an expert in finance but has little idea about digital marketing or how to reach an audience through video content.

Great leaders seek input from those around them. Not only do they get to build on their own knowledge, but they gain insights from different perspectives and cultivate a culture of knowledge sharing throughout their organisation.

2 HUMILITY IS KEY

Being a leader can be quite seductive, particularly when you get the first few success stories under your belt. It can lead us to believe that we “made it on our own” and “achieved success single-handedly”.

From Moses to Mark Zuckerberg, not a single leader has ever achieved anything without the help of others.

In all leadership journeys, there will be successes and failures and we’ll do well to keep the poet Rudyard Kipling’s advice in mind and treat Triumph and Disaster as the same.

When we fall down, we need help to get back up, and help from others is most readily available when we remain humble in times of success.

3 READ – A LOT

It’s no surprise that many of the world’s most successful leaders are avid readers. In books, we have portable masterclasses from the greatest thinkers both past and present that show us how to achieve, succeed as well as overcome challenges and avoid pitfalls.

Great leaders seek input from those around them. Not only do they get to build on their own knowledge, but they gain insights from different perspectives and cultivate a culture of knowledge sharing throughout their organisation.

The single constant that separates the top one per cent of high income earners is that they read. A lot. Read how the power of reading had inspired Paul C. Brunson to have more success. Check this article on Leaderonomics.com: bit.ly/2hrchxb

From Moses to Mark Zuckerberg, not a single leader has ever achieved anything without the help of others.

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I can imagine children rejoicing at the title of this article and refusing to practice whatever craft they are currently mastering. To clarify, practice can make perfect, but what if you are practising something imperfect?

Obviously, you will end up doing something imperfect perfectly, right? I’m sure all golfers agree.

Once you practice had form early in your golf education, it’s hard to get rid of it. You will have your imperfect swing and swing it perfectly every time.

**PRACTICE FORMS HABITS**  
It’s the same with work. We get into habits. Habits that are formed out of years of practice, even if it is a bad habit. For example, some of us are good at procrastinating, and we get away with it every single time. And we think it’s okay because we produce good work under pressure.

What if there was another way that you could do even better work?

How about giving yourself intermediary timelines and putting pressure on yourself to come up with three versions before the final one?

But because we have practised how to push things to the last minute and get away with it, we continue to do so. This is a case where practice makes imperfect.

Another scenario is when people work a certain way in one culture and struggle in another culture.

I see this with people who move from small- and medium-sized enterprises to multinational corporations, or vice versa. This applies across industries too, e.g. from an information technology (IT) company to a manufacturing company.

What we’ve practised and has brought us success in a previous environment doesn’t necessarily work in the new environment.

A case in point: When I worked in IT in a manufacturing environment, it was very important the decisions I made were vetted by my boss to avoid the risk of it conflicting with other decisions.

But when I moved to an IT company, things were different. In fact, the bosses would be upset if I tried to validate my decisions with them. Sometimes, what works in one context doesn’t work in the other.

It happens even within a company. I just had a conversation with a client who was a star performer, but after being promoted to management, dropped in productivity.

Guess what? He was doing exactly what he had been good at or “practising” before.

What people had recognised him and promoted him for, is now not what he needs to do to succeed. He needs to forget everything he has been practising. Again, a case of practice makes imperfect.

**LEARNING NEW PRACTICES**  
This is where learning needs to focus on these types of transitions of roles – where there is a need to break an old way of doing things.

One of the best ways for onboarding is to have internal leaders teach sessions that are contextual.

After all, the leaders in the company carry the secret sauce of the company, so they should be teaching it to the new people who may not be aware about this new way.

It’s not because the new joiners are incompetent, but because it’s not about what worked for them before.

For this, I believe learning can bridge this gap.

Learning and development leaders need to spend more time capturing this internal knowledge into their training curriculum. Preferably digitally, so that it is accessible to everyone.

It’s an important step often missed out during onboarding. We assume everyone knows how to run a meeting, but there are differences in practices from one company to another.

When we onboard people into a company, we often just tell them how to log in to systems, and how to apply for leave, resource policies, etc.

Unfortunately, we don’t spend time bringing people up to speed on the way things work in that specific company, especially with an experienced hire.

We assume they already know most things. They’ve been good before and have a lot of experience doing what they used to do. But is that what they need to be doing here?

It’s not about innovating new practices. It’s about realising that an old practice doesn’t always work over time or over a new situation.

And having an ecosystem to enable learning of a new practice is important. It’s not about finding the “best practice”. It’s about recognising that practice is not always perfect.

**HOW DO WE ARRIVE AT “BEST PRACTICE”?**

What does best practice mean? It means the most efficient way to get something done.

Most best practices are “best” in a certain situation, and they don’t apply to all situations. So why do we assume that they will work for us?

In certain environments, that may not be what you need if the focus is on productivity instead of collaboration.

If Elon Musk replicated best practices, we wouldn’t have cheaper re-usable rockets today.

If the software industry followed best practices a long time ago, we wouldn’t have free open source software out of proprietary software.

Hence, we need to stop thinking that best practice is “the best practice”. Rather, it should be called “sometimes good practice”.  

**ARE THESE BEST PRACTICES IMPORTANT?**

Yes. They are good to benchmark – making sure we are doing as well as others think we should be doing. It’s also good to accelerate learning internally in an organisation.

It’s good to set aside what’s the current, best-known way or culture within a company. Capture the internal intellectual property in a company and make it available for everyone. That’s how learning becomes a strategic weapon.

But we know that in today’s world, we are agile and our practices need to be agile, too. So, best practices need to be continuously refreshed.

Best practices of yesterday are not best practices of today, let alone tomorrow. Mike Myatt, author of Hacking Leadership, said it best. He uses the term “next practices” to redirect people to be forward thinking.

**TYING IT TOGETHER**

The key is to foster the culture of unlearning and re-learning – not to get anchored by best practices, but to be continuously looking to improve on them.

To do this, you need a way to bring the whole organisation alongside you. You need the learning ecosystem to support the evolving best practices. Get your best sales guy to teach the rest what works or what is the currently known best practice.

Best practices are a good starting point. But definitely not the ending point. The environment will continue to evolve.

As companies evolve, we need to focus on one thing. We are trying to do something better, and more efficiently. For that, best practices are a good starting point, but definitely not the ending point.

Best practices get us started quickly so that we know how to get moving, but we must not think that they are “the best practices”. It’s when we do that we wind up in a situation when practice makes imperfect.

Instead, focus on how to always better the practice with a new practice, and know that there is no ‘perfect’.

Key takeaways:
1. Use best practices as a starting point.
2. Always experiment to test out new practices, or next practices.
3. Find a way to capture the learnings and continuously disseminate throughout the organisation.
4. Repeat.
By Rob Wyse

FINANCE A MUST ON PATH TO CEO

Giella underscored that finance has become front and centre in running an organisation. Two key issues that have driven this heightened need:

- Increased business complexity
- Understanding the implication in strategic initiatives

1 BUSINESS COMPLEXITY

Business is increasingly becoming more complex. Giella cited his industry: healthcare. He said, “In healthcare for example, before DRGs (diagnosis-related groups) came out, healthcare was a cost plus reimbursement business – it was pretty simple to run financially.”

“Now the deals are huge and complex. You need to understand not only finance, but also the implications of the technology, supply chain, people and systems. The deals are seven, eight or nine-digit types of investments and critical thinking, and financial acumen is a must – a miscalculation on one of these projects could be detrimental.”

Giella described a successful career path as an hourglass. “As you start out in your career, you can be broad and try several different functions, but as your career develops, you need to focus on a speciality where you can make your mark.”

“That’s where the hourglass narrows. Then, when you move to the senior management level, where critical decisions are discussed at executive leadership meetings, the best people learn from their colleagues and get skilled in all functional areas of an organisation – that is where the hourglass widens.”

Giella said if you are the finance person, you have to know human resources, marketing, operations, information technology (IT) and more. So, you go from really wide learning early in your career, to becoming an expert in a narrower area, to becoming a broad thinker at the executive management level where group dynamics and decision-making are critical.

“I, in order to get to the top, you have to have run something, for creditability purposes, you have to have some type of operational experience somewhere in an organisation. For health systems, it does not have to be running inpatient units. It could be on the outpatient level, major service lines, or an ancillary business. Bottom line though is you need some kind of significant P&L experience.”

If you are a purely staff person and have never run anything, Giella noted it is less likely you will land a top spot. “Some time is ticking. Nicolò Machiavelli capsulised perspective on time in this famous quote: ‘The more sand has escaped from the hourglass of our life, the clearer we should see through it.”

As your career develops, look back, broaden your perspective, and make sure you understand the numbers. It can land you at the number one spot.

FINANCE FOR NON-FINANCE FOLKS

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Leadersonomics spoke to Tom Corine, founder and co-owner of Tri Corporation, who shared on what world-class finance looks like and how business simulations have helped enhance the financial acumen of professionals from the likes of General Electric, Dell, Microsoft and Computer Associates. Corine shared how learning through finance simulations provides the opportunity and space to exchange ideas on tackling the challenges of operating a business in times of slow economic growth. Check out this podcast: bit.ly/RYGFinancialLeadership

Rob Wyse is a leading publicist in the United States as well as a prolific writer. He is a top commentator on workplace issues and dysfunctional CEOs. Rob is also the managing director of Capital Content, a PR and marketing firm that develops issues-driven thought leadership and strategic communications campaigns. To connect with him, email us at editor@leaderonomics.com.
A GREAT CEO IN THE MAKING?

5 SKILLS THAT WILL HELP YOU GET THERE

By BRETT FOX
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W
ould you know the secrets to being a great CEO? If so, would you be able to tell your CEO that he or she was actually a great CEO? Would you know what it really takes to be a great CEO? Would you even know the first step to becoming a great CEO?

Some of us are more or less qualified with our business degrees or work experience, but do our qualifications expand to us knowing how to handle or help our CEOs?

THE SECRETS TO BEING A GREAT CEO

What makes a CEO great?

As a matter of fact, many people believe that being a great leader is all about having a great ego, charisma, and a strong personality. However, having these traits alone is not enough for a successful CEO. There are other important factors that contribute to being a great CEO.

1. **Strategic Thinking**
   - A great CEO is someone who can think strategically. They can understand the big picture and make decisions that will benefit the company in the long run.

2. **Strong Communication Skills**
   - Communication is the lifeblood of any organization. A great CEO is someone who can communicate effectively with employees, customers, and other stakeholders.

3. **Integrity and Trust**
   - Integrity is the foundation of any successful business. A great CEO is someone who can build and maintain trust with their team and stakeholders.

4. **Innovation and Risk-Taking**
   - Innovation is key to staying ahead of the competition. A great CEO is someone who is willing to take calculated risks to drive growth.

5. **Empathy and Leadership**
   - A great CEO is someone who can inspire and lead their team. They understand the needs and concerns of their employees and work to create a positive workplace culture.

The general lesson, however, is that the difference between a good leader and a great leader is the difference between mediocrity and success. CEOs with good leaders are more likely to see their companies succeed, while those with great leaders are more likely to see their companies thrive.

Gifford’s vision of building a great analog integrated circuit company never wavered. It was the same in year one as it was in year two. The focus was on constant and continuous improvement.

By SUNDAY CLEARY
leader@leaderonomics.com

LEADERSHIP of oil was governed by two main principles: law and the social contract. The former were few and slow. Followers were convinced of many, and results mattered almost all. If you got involved and connected and support, you might be pointed to the nearest after the trial.

The old style of leadership was forced to make way for the new, transformative approach.

BETRAYAL OF TRUST

The trial failed, but the leader’s trust was not. He had been betrayed, and the people he trusted had given the answers after all, and nor they did. The leader could not make the decisions. As a result, this great Analog company

A GREATER WAY TO BUILD TRUST

By SANDY CLARK
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Trust and relationships play a long way in building a healthy and productive environment. Through our Talkin’ Trust and Relationship Breakthrough workshop with leaders, par- ticipants will be able to identify their relationship styles, build trust with each other, and develop strategies to deal with others and resolve conflicts, become more self-aware, and increase confidence and abilities, collaborate and lead their clients.”

Editorial content services are more difficult.

Trust is a delicate matter. It takes time to build and trust is broken, it seems to take forever to rebuild. In this Be-a-Leader video series, we will explore how to

3 WAYS TO BUILD TRUST

1. **ALIGN YOUR WORDS WITH YOUR ACTIONS**
   - It’s important to align your words and actions. If your words are empty or don’t match your actions, your credibility will be questioned.

2. **BE HONEST**
   - Being a leader is about being transparent. It means not hiding things or being dishonest. Being honest will help build trust with your team.

3. **SHOW PEOPLE THAT YOU GENUINELY CARE**
   - Show your team that you genuinely care about their well-being. This can be done through small gestures like acknowledging their efforts or taking the time to listen to their concerns.

If you want to see more of this, sign up to our newsletter at www.leaderonomics.com.
BREAKING BOUNDARIES

HOW ONE LEADERSHIP CAMP MADE A DIFFERENCE TO REFUGEE CHILDREN

By MWAFFAQ ALHAJJAR
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"Leaders are not always born! They can be made!"

T hat was my first thought after coming back from the DIODE Youth Leadership Camp. It all started when I was appointed to accompany a group of refugee students to a leadership camp, from the school I had been working in since late 2017. I packed my bags and grabbed a book to read thinking that I would have time for it, like in a school camp! As a teacher in a refugee school, and a refugee myself, I do know the obstacles that refugees are facing around the world, particularly in Malaysia. My biggest concern has always been the children – their hopes and dreams; teenagers who are marginalized and grow up away from normal conditions. How could they possibly believe in their future, when they witness the barriers their families face daily? Hence, I was curious to see their interactions during this camp and the results they would get.

THE CAMP HELPED BREAK BARRIERS

During my first moments at the camp, I knew right away that this experience would be something that would stay with me for a lifetime. I can’t even begin to express what I felt, seeing my students integrating with the other groups of students and facilitators, expressing themselves slowly and happily. The camp, as I noticed, was a real opportunity to showcase their skills and talents, to speak about their dreams, loudly and fearlessly. A quote I had once read sprang to mind: “The art of communication is the language of leadership,” and that was truly what these teenagers needed – to start demonstrating their potential. Having conversations, building relationships, and exchanging thoughts and ideas with others, confidently helped them overcome the difficulty of being strangers. Moreover, being embraced with love and care from facilitators and peers paved the path for them to shine.

LAST IMPRESSIONS

Looking back at those six astonishing days, there were a few who really stood out.

I’ll never forget Dima*, a teenager from Yemen, who was deeply touched in the Breaking Boundaries session. She faced her fears and worries, probably for the first time ever. She released all her weaknesses through tears and discovered that she was not alone. Day after day, I could see Dima overcoming her pain and sorrows. Then there was Ahmad*. He was a young man who impressed everyone at the camp. He was a friend to all the students. In fact, all the campers loved to sit with him because of his humble personality. The camp was also the perfect opportunity for Ahmad to showcase his talent: I discovered that he writes his own lyrics and produces beautiful music. Another inspiring story would be Bahar*, a girl from Iran who had been facing issues with her self-esteem. She was always covering her face and was always hiding behind the lights. Midway through the camp, she came to the hall of campers and stood tall and proud with the rest of them with a big, confident smile on her face.

The camp helped break barriers. Those six astonishing days, there were a few who really stood out. I knew right away that this experience would be something that would stay with me for a lifetime. I can’t even begin to express what I felt, seeing my students integrating with the other groups of students and facilitators, expressing themselves slowly and happily. The camp, as I noticed, was a real opportunity to showcase their skills and talents, to speak about their dreams, loudly and fearlessly.

When I entered the camp, the facilitators were a group of professionals. Tirelessly, they were extracting the buried energy from every participant, believing in their potential and giving them a hand to light their future. It was just amazing!

*Pseudonym used to protect the individual’s privacy.

■ Mwaffaq is from Syria. He is a petrochemical engineer and a creative writer, who is now working at the Malaysian Social Research Institute school as a chemistry teacher. To share your thoughts with him, write in to editor@leaderonomics.com.
BREAKING THROUGH LIMITING MINDSETS

By ROUBEENI MOHAN
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BREAKING through a mindset is not as easy as it seems. This is because we are brought up with a certain mindset which may contradict with society or even your own family principles. These misconceptions and worldviews can become a barrier to what you want in life.

HOW DO THESE MINDSETS COME ABOUT?
The first influencers of children are their parents and family. They instil what is right and wrong in these young ones. As these children grow up, they are exposed to the society and, therefore, they gain more exposure and they learn more things. This is where they are exposed to stereotypes, cultural differences and different characters of people around them. But because of their upbringing for the first five years of their lives, children have already been fixed with a certain degree of mindset.

When they start going to school, their peers and teachers further influence them, therefore making them a moulded individual.

WHY IS IT BAD TO HAVE A FIXED MINDSET?
Fixed mindsets limit individuals from attaining their full potential. Their talent can go unnoticed if they remain afraid to bring it out, as they fear it could contradict with what has already been instilled within them.

These individuals later feel suffocated and there’ll be a point they’d feel incomplete. Like something is still holding them back, and they are not who they are to a point they later become withdrawn.

Mindsets tend to limit people from looking at the bigger picture and limit them from thinking of the various possibilities or the various options that are available to a problem.

If you have tried something new and failed at the first attempt, you’re most likely to give up immediately because you perceive that you’re born with innate abilities and skills, which will never change.

With this mindset, if you face challenges, you’re most likely to stop: ‘I’m not good at it, so why bother pursuing?’

The second mindset is that your abilities and skills are pliable. If you try something and it doesn’t work, it is because you haven’t given your best.

If you experience hiccups in the process, you are most likely to keep striving until you get better at it.

BREAKING THROUGH A LIMITING MINDSET

When people are frustrated when they can’t pursue what they really want, they tend to vent, which is good because it helps them release pent up frustrations.

However, if they don’t do something about what is holding them back, the venting becomes a habit.

Take charge of your life and identify the strings that are holding you captive of your “freedom”. It is easier said than done, for you’d be at loggerheads with family.

When they set their minds, they tend to lose sight of things that could be right in front of them, because they’re so focused on their beliefs.

When plans don’t work out, they tend to get stressed out and demotivated, that they don’t try to get back up after several failed attempts.

TYPES OF LIMITING MINDSET

According to Josh Kaufman, the author of The Personal MBA: Master the Art of Business, there are two predominant ways to looking at the world – two mindsets that influence a person’s response to new experiences.

The most common mindset is that your abilities and skills are fixed.

1. Identify where you are emotionally.
   
   Are you guilty, overwhelmed, stuck, demotivated, stressed or depressed?
   
   You cannot make a change for yourself when you are caught up in these emotional states; there is simply not enough energy.
   
   Once you’ve identified the pattern, you can decide how to fix the problem.

2. What is the remedy?
   
   If fear is holding you back, then courage is the remedy.
   
   You have to muster the courage within you to take a leap of faith. You have to push through the barrier.
   
   Treat your emotions like muscles. The more practice you get, the stronger it becomes. Identify your triggers. What makes you angry or sad?
   
   Try to be in tuned with your emotions. People may say you’re selfish for doing this for yourself, but you have to remember that your mental health is above all.

3. Practise that emotion.
   
   Remember that you can come out of your frustrations. If you identify what is causing your frustrations, then you can start taking action.
   
   The key is to be consistent. It is hard work and if you falter, you won’t be able to see the progress you’ll be making.
   
   If you are well aware of your triggers and keep practising, it soon becomes a natural response.

4. Condition the emotion.
   
   This is where your life changes, i.e. when your newfound emotions become the new normal.
   
   If you want to pursue something in your life desperately, you have to take the first step. If you don’t strive for it, do not expect your social circle to see where you are coming from and to support you.

Take charge of your life and identify the strings that are holding you captive of your “freedom”. It is easier said than done, for you’d be at loggerheads with family.
Belief alone does not yield success. Great breakthroughs can only be accomplished through hard work, planning, leadership and practice, but without the fire of belief, most people quit. What are the things in your life that you want to do but everyone thinks are impossible? Maybe even you believe they are impossible. Perhaps, though, if you have given up on, or a target you think can’t be achieved. Maybe you think it is impossible to turn your business around, or to inspire your employees? Check out his article on Leaderonomics.com; bit.ly/RTBeliefsystem

WHAT PEOPLE REGRET MOST

5 WAYS TO MAKE SURE YOU NEVER DO

By JEFF HADEN
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L

OOK forward and the path seems uncertain, the future impossible to predict. Look back and all your dots seem to connect... except, of course, the dots that mark the actions you didn’t take. Those dots? They don’t connect to anything – except regrets.

Research shows that more people regret things they didn’t do than the things they did, even if things they did turned out badly. (After all, with time and effort, you can fix almost any mistake – but you can’t go back and do the things you dreamed of doing but didn’t, which means you can only think about how today would be different if you had.)

A new study takes the idea even further, probing the kinds of regrets we have about the people we don’t become, a natural extension of the actions we didn’t take.

Researchers focused on three things:

1. Our actual selves: The traits and abilities we think we possess, i.e. who we think we are
2. Our ought selves: The traits and abilities we think we should possess, i.e. who we think we should be (think responsibilities and obligations)
3. Our ideal selves: The traits, abilities, and accomplishments we would like to possess, i.e. our goals, hopes and dreams.

It makes sense that we regret not doing the things we think we are supposed to do. Working harder at our professions, working harder to be healthier.

It’s natural to regret not working harder on things we ought to accomplish.

But research shows most people (72%) feel regret related to their ideal self as opposed to their ought self (28%).

In fact, when asked to name their single biggest life regret, 76% of participants cite an action not taken that would have helped them realise their ideal self.

As one of the authors of the study says, “When we evaluate our lives, we think about whether we’re heading toward our ideal selves, becoming the person we’d like to be. Those are the regrets that are going to stick with you, because they are what you look at through the windshields of life.”

“The ‘ought’ regrets are potholes on the road. Those were problems, but now they’re behind you. To be sure, there are certain failures to live up to our ‘ought’ selves that are extremely painful and can haunt a person forever; so many great works of fiction draw upon precisely that fact.

“...but for most people, those types of regrets are far outnumbered by the ways in which they fall short of their ideal selves.”

In short, we most regret thinking we didn’t reach our full potential. We most regret not becoming the person we feel we could have become...if we only had tried.

Because that is one mistake you can never go back and fix. But it is one mistake you can stop making today.

...To start taking action to realise your ideal self, do the following.

1. Always make your goal tangible and specific.

Say you want to get in better shape. “Get in better shape” sounds great, but what does it mean? Nothing. It’s just a wish.

“Lose 10 pounds in 30 days” is a specific, measurable, objective goal.

Not only do you know what you want to accomplish but setting that specific goal also allows you to create a process to get you there. You can set up your work out schedule and follow the plan. Always set a goal that allows you to work backward and create a process designed to achieve it. It’s impossible to know exactly what to do every day when you don’t know exactly what you want to achieve.

2. Always make your goal matter.

If you want to get in better shape so other people will think you look better at the beach this summer, you’re unlikely to follow through.

But if you want to get in better shape because you want to feel better about yourself, or to set an example for your kids, then you’re much more likely to stick with it.

Now your goal has meaning. Not for your doctor, or to strangers on the beach, but to you.

3. Always make your goal a positive goal.

Stop criticising other people in meetings “is a great goal, but it’s a negative goal. It’s a lot harder to give up or stop doing something than it is to embrace a new and positive challenge.

Plus, setting a goal like “stop eating sweets” means you constantly have to choose to avoid temptation — and since willpower is often a finite resource, why put yourself in a position of constantly needing to choose?

Always pick positive goals. That way, you’ll be working to become something new, rather than to avoid being something you no longer wish to be.

4. Always set your goal, and then forget your goal.

I know... we’re told to focus on our goals. Yet one of the biggest reasons people give up on huge goals is the distance between here, where you are today, and there, where you someday hope to be.

If today, you’re able to run only a mile, and your goal is to run a marathon, the distance between here and there seems insurmountable. So you give up, because there’s no way you’ll get from here to there.

That’s why almost all successful people set a goal and then focus all their attention on the process necessary to achieve that goal.

Sure, the goal is still out there. But what they care about most is what they need to do today. And when they accomplish that, they feel happy about today.

And they feel good about themselves, because they’ve accomplished what they set out to do today. That sense of accomplishment gives them all the motivation they need to do what they need to do when tomorrow comes – because success, even tiny, incremental success, is the best motivation of all.

When you savour the small victories, you get to feel good about yourself every day, because you no longer feel compelled to compare the distance between here and there.

If you do what you planned to do today, you’re a winner.

5. Always focus on the daily process.

The key to long-term success is to create a process that guarantees a series of small improvements. Usually, that means what you don’t want to be different from what other successful people do.

Pick someone who has achieved something you want to achieve. Deconstruct his/her process. Then follow it.

Along the way, you might make small corrections as you learn what works best for you, but never start by doing what you want to do, or what feels good, or what you think might work.

Do what is proven to work. Otherwise, you’ll give up, because the process you create won’t yield those small successes that keep you motivated and feeling good about yourself.

If you think about it, it is the perfect definition of success. And, it is the perfect way to avoid the regret of not becoming your ideal self.
WHO CHEERS FOR YOU?

By DAN ROCKWELL
editor@leaderonomics.com

YOU cheer for others. But who
cheers for you? Some can’t
stand it if you’re “too” happy.
Most are okay if you’re a
little bit happy or a little bit
successful. If you’re average,
It’s okay to long for more but what-
over you do, don’t actually reach for it.
And heaven forbid if it happens.

TOO HAPPY
If you’re too happy, kill-joys give you
a good dose of “reality”. Too much suc-
cess and they’ll warn, “Watch out for
arrogance”.

VULNERABLE
I’m never more vulnerable than
when I’m celebrating. Someone comes
along and lets me know that I’m not
comfortable you are at receiving praise,
the less frequently it occurs.

CREATE CHEERLEADERS
1. Take a vacation from critiques,
tweaks, and improvements.
   Establish no-negativity time.
   Saturday morning is positive-time,
   for example.
   No improvements. No tweaks.
   Just positive speech or silence. Make
   it fun. Establish a fine for violations
   and put the money in the pizza
   fund.
2. Receive praise with gratitude. The
   problem may be you. The less com-
   fortable you are at receiving praise,
   the less frequently it occurs.
3. Establish the 3-to-1 rule. Call for
   everyone to make three positive
   statements for every negative.
   Positive speech builds positive envi-
   ronments. Words are rudders.
4. Celebrate small. Stop waiting for
   the big stuff.
5. Find a brag buddy.
6. Bonus: Invite whiners, kill-joys,
   and complainers to make three positive
   statements. Say, “I’ll wait.”

Is there a colleague who is
feeling low due to unmet
personal and professional
expectations? Here are 10
things you can do to cheer
him/her up. Check out this
infographic: bit.ly/igTop10cheerup

How can you build a positive
vibe around your life and
leadership?

Dan Rockwell is a coach and
speaker and is freakishly inter-
ested in leadership. He is an
author of a world-renowned
leadership blog, Leadership
Freak. To get in touch with
Dan, write to us at editor@
leaderonomics.com.

Happiness is actually the pre-requisite
to success, writes Shawn Achor, author
of the book The Happiness Advantage.
According to Achor, happiness and
optimism are the fuel that drives
performance and achievement. To gain
insights from this book, check out:
bit.ly/EShappyadvantage

Online Exclusive
What happened in the FIFA World Cup 2018
group stages may be old news by now, but the
lessons we can take away from the performance
of the various teams are as relevant as ever.
Check out this article before the World Cup
finals next Sunday:
bit.ly/2018WorldCupLessons

My favorite things in life don’t cost any
money. It’s really clear that the most
precious resource we all have is time.
– Steve Jobs

Ice cream is a timeless dessert which most people love. Datuk SY
Cheah, the founder of Golden Scoop SnD Bhd (the sole licensee
for Baskin-Robbins in Malaysia) shares his business advice in this
CEO BizChat hosted by Leaderonomics head of coaching Chong
Keat Lim. Watch the video: bit.ly/BizChatCheah

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!
It’s a common debate that is gaining more traction as we move towards the future of work: should you be a generalist or a specialist? There are pros and cons to both answers, but the best solution might be right in the middle, i.e. a T-shaped employee.

What’s that? Head on to Leaderonomics.com to find out: bit.ly/JMgeneralistspecialist

Being the Jack of All Trades or a specialised professional comes with its own set of pros and cons but being the Jack of All Trades and at Master of One can bring one far in their respective careers. Check out this article on Leaderonomics.com: bit.ly/LDjackofalltrades

The Law of Diminishing Returns

By ROHINI RAJARATNAM
editor@leaderonomics.com

Picture this, you’ve been craving your favourite slice of salted caramel cheesecake. You give in, have a slice and finish it immediately. Then you get another slice and you eat that up too. As more and more pieces are bought, the speed at which you eat reduces. You start eating slower than before, with less enthusiasm, since your cravings have been satisfied and you feel a bit sick.

Measuring your output

That is the Law of Diminishing Returns, a concept in economics that if one factor of production (the slice of cake in the example) is increased while other factors (size of the slice and person eating the cake, for example) are held constant, the output per unit (satisfaction of cravings) of the variable factor will eventually diminish.

The concept is a rather good theory to debunk a modern-day myth. Society believes that long working hours yield greater output. Ironically, long working hours actually bring about a decrease in productivity once it passed a certain point. Not to mention, sleep deprivation plus motivation.

Digging in

Remember the first two slices of cake? Well, that’s the period of maximum returns, i.e. when cravings were satisfied and you hadn’t felt sick yet. The idea is to stop once you reach the point of maximum returns; that is when the initial cravings for the salted caramel cheesecake were satisfied. Focus instead on putting your energy into areas you haven’t tried before. It’s constantly learning a little about a lot of things, rather than learning lot about a few things. The benefit to this is something Scott Adams of Dilbert fame calls “talent stack”, simply a stack of talents that work well together.

People tend to achieve success by being good at a particular area, which by no means is true. The alternative is by combining a bunch of talent and skills and using it in a unique way. It’s like being a jack of all trades. There are instances when we should pass the point of maximum return; when the benefit of achieving maximum output outweighs the high cost of reaching there.

Take, for example, you were craving for a slice of salted caramel cheesecake, but coincidentally there was a cake-eating competition. So, the benefit of winning the competition outweighed the cost of feeling sick and losing pleasure in the dessert.

Be warned though, when passing the point of maximum returns, all opportunity cost associated must be taken into account. Opportunity cost is the cost measured in terms of the value of the alternative forgone, i.e. the opportunity to try other cakes instead of just the salted caramel cheesecake.

Food for thought

The question is, do you want to be a jack of all trades or a master of one?

Rohini is a law graduate and freelance writer. Her areas of interest are personal development, social rights, and reflective writing. Share your thoughts with us at editor@leaderonomics.com.
THE BUS COMING THEMSELVES on their priority list. After all, business is their careers. Building relationships is low on their list. “Leadership is the mark of a leader.”

Many of us are frequently frustrated with our bosses. But does your unhappiness equate to you having a bad boss?

Are you a boss who loves your people? Do you take time to get to know their strengths and provide them with a role that best fits their strengths? The best bosses do.

FOCUSING ME Since bad bosses never really get to know you, they are never able to factor you in. All I need to do is to be friends. Some of my best bosses were inspiring yet challenging. They knew how to seamlessly move from authoritative to inspirational at just the right moment. So, what delineates a good boss from a bad one?

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