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DID you know that Malaysia is home to some of the oldest tropical rainforests in the world? They are even older than the Amazon, and date back to when dinosaurs were roaming the earth.

It is because of this diverse and abundant natural resource that Malaysia has had a long history in the timber industry and is well-known for its wood-based furniture.

We are currently one of the top 10 exporters of furniture in the world, with approximately 60 per cent of our production sent to countries such as the United States, Japan, Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United Arab Emirates.

Mixed tropical wood was initially the go-to material for the industry, but in the 1980s, rubberwood emerged as an alternative source of timber when the Malaysian government implemented a restriction on logging activities.

Although rubberwood was traditionally regarded as waste, it quickly found widespread use in the wood-based industry, and has been a popular source material for furniture, particleboard and medium-density fibreboard (MDF) since then.

It has also been promoted as a sustainable resource, but Malaysia has seen a major shift from rubber to palm oil over the years, as oil palm crops have been deemed more profitable.

With the total land area dedicated to rubber plantations shrinking and oil palm increasing, the availability of rubberwood for the Malaysian wood-based industry is steadily declining.

As a result, businesses that are reliant on rubberwood are not able to grow any further, and are in fact struggling to find alternative sources of raw material.

A GLOBAL CHALLENGE

“Globally, we’re moving into a situation where timber will be in short supply because the global population is growing, while the amount of virgin forests is declining,” says Segamat Panel Boards (SPB) managing director, Peter Fitch (pic).

Although Europe, North America and Japan do have large plantations which are sustainable sources of timber, Fitch says the issue lies in the fact that these countries are not able to afford the cost of harvesting and processing the raw material, since labour costs are high.

On the other hand, China and other countries in Southeast Asia (SEA) and Eastern Europe have relatively low-cost manufacturing, but unfortunately, these countries lack the sustainably-managed natural resources that Europe, North America and Japan have.

Fitch says, “The biggest manufacturer of furniture and timber products are in China and SEA, so this is where we’re going to have a crisis in terms of the supply of raw material. This is also going to be a problem in the Middle East and South Africa, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. That’s sort of following the same model as what is happening in China and SEA.”

“We need to do is match the supply of raw material with where the majority of the furniture and timber product manufacturers are,” adds Fitch.

Fitch also emphasises the need for Malaysia to ensure that we do harvest from our tropical rainforests is sustainable in the long run, as they are already relatively depleted.

In addition, the era of rubberwood in Malaysia, which fuelled the growth of the wood-based manufacturing industry in the past, is also coming to an end.

“Is the dilemma that Malaysia has at the moment,” states Fitch. “There is currently no additional driver to direct the next innovation or the next growth in terms of the manufacturing of furniture and timber-related products.”

SOLVING THE LOCAL ISSUES

When asked about possible solutions for Malaysia’s wood-based industry in the next five to 10 years, Fitch had this to say: “Personally, I think Malaysia should not be exporting round logs – we should process all the round logs and timber we have nationally, and add value to the resources we have.

“I think that is the first fundamental step that Malaysia should take, regardless of whether it’s in Peninsular or East Malaysia.”

The second thing, Fitch says, is that there should be proper enforcement of all the current rules, regulations and laws pertaining to forestry and the timber industry.

He is of the opinion that the relevant regulations are already in place, and as long as we step up the enforcement of these laws, the timber industry will be in much better condition in terms of sustainability.

As for the wood panel and sawn timber industries, Fitch thinks that there is not much room for expansion beyond what is currently being done. “All they can do is become more efficient in terms of recovery and the way they utilise the valuable raw materials,” he says.

“However, I think the Malaysian furniture industry has a bright future. As long as they can be innovative in their designs and automate their processes where possible, they should be able to compete relatively well with China and other large furniture manufacturing countries.”

“They can also bring in raw materials from neighbouring countries such as Thailand and Indonesia so that they have an abundant supply of it,” says Fitch.

Fitch believes that the next driver for the industry’s growth as a whole will be how effectively industry players can utilise and process the raw materials available from the oil palm plantations.

“We need to consolidate, improve our enforcement, and increase our efficiency of processing when it comes to timber, but the growth of the industry will come from oil palm biomass,” states Fitch.

BRINGING IT TOGETHER

The rainforests are under huge environmental pressure because as the demand for timber goes up, so does the value of timber, which leads to the temptation for more illegal logging.

Rubberwood is on the decline as people replant areas with oil palm, resulting in nearly 800 million standing trunks of oil palm in Peninsular Malaysia alone – all of which are completely underutilised.

“I think Malaysia has to do this. I mean, we’ve got no choice. We have such a lot of resources here that are just wasted at the moment; we need to use it for something,” says Fitch.

When asked about the wood-based industry’s shift towards OPT as an alternative to traditional timber, Fitch had this to say: "We’re starting from a very low base, so it will take time to see some real progress, but it’s already moving towards this direction.

“I think once the technology is perfected and the materials are accepted, growth will be exponential. Furthermore, the economic multiplier effect for the economy would be tremendous, whilst being a positive contributor to Malaysia’s commitment to the Paris Climate Accord.”
By ROSHAN THIRAN
roshan.thiran@leaderonomics.com

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NE of the core values we espouse at Leaderonomics is ‘Giving’ – not only does it help to create an authentic sense of belonging within our social enterprise, but it also drives lots of creative ideas and deeper engagement.

Traditionally, the idea of focusing on what might have been described as ‘soft’ values has been viewed as something of a luxury – one that leaders might indulge in once they take care of the ‘real’ hard-core business of performance, results, and the bottom line.

However, in recent years, research has shown that treating people like early industrial factory workers (i.e. automa
tons paid to do a job) has a detrimental effect on performance.

People feel disengaged and demoralised by leaders who neglect their employ
ees’ well-being – the best they can expect to receive is the bare minimum offered through compliance.

WHAT’S IN IT FOR GIVERS AND RECEIVERS?
A study conducted by researchers at the University of California headed by Joseph Chancellor found that, where the University of California headed by

Workers from a range of departments at Coca-Cola’s Madrid site were told that they were taking part in a happiness study. Once a week for four weeks, they were to report how they were feeling in terms of mood and life satisfaction, and their experience of positive and negative behaviours.

After the four weeks, the participants reported further measures including hap

piness as job satisfaction.

The workers didn’t know that 19 members of the group were tasked by the researchers to be ‘givers’, and to carry out random acts of kindness (which they were free to choose) for a month.

Examples of these small acts were bringing someone a drink or sending a colleague a pleasant, uplifting thank-you message.

At the end of the one month, the receivers of the random acts reported 10 times more prosocial behaviours in the office compared to workers who received no special attention.

Remarkably, the acts of kindness were not a result of obligation – receivers paid their kindness forward to people other than the original givers, which suggests that employees in general are eager to participate in a culture of giving within an organisation that encourages generosity.

Giving, then, turns out to be much more than a ‘soft’ value – it offers real, tangible benefits to both givers and receivers, and enhances the culture of an organisation as a result.

While this might seem as an obvious state of play, the study really acts as a reminder to leaders (and to each of us individually) of the importance of giving, and that we should make more of an effort to help each other in any way that we can, however small the act of kindness.

There are many ways to give – even connecting people is giving.

The key to fostering a culture of giving is to ensure that it’s cultivated naturally, rather than a culture that’s enforced.

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We’re not really giving at all, but rather returning the favour, which feels more like a debt repaid on both sides.

Another positive finding by the study was that those who received acts of kind

ness were keen to pay them forward, engaging in three times more prosocial behaviours than did workers who received no special attention.

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TOP-DOWN APPROACH
As always, leaders can take the initia

tive and set an example of the kind of culture they want to see within their organisation.

By engaging regularly in behaviours such as praise and recognition, lending a helping hand, and encouraging others to let them know how things are going, leaders can set the tone for an environ

ment that’s geared towards lifting people up through acts of kindness.

The vital ingredient here is consistency in practising the behaviours we’d like to see shaping our organisation for the better.

Giving freely to others is a great way to foster unity and boost morale and engagement. It’s also a fantastic way to help organisations grow and be a thriving example of the difference they endeav

ours to make to their people, custom

ers, shareholders and the communities around them.

Ultimately, leaders should view the quality of giving as the ‘real’ business that, in the end, is what truly helps to drive performance, results and the bot

tom line.

For more insights into business, personal development and leadership, connect with Roshan on Facebook or Twitter (@Rpaper1) or for more insights into business, personal development and leadership.
THE FUTURE OF ENERGY
CREATING SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION HABITS

By CHRISTIE CHUA
christie.chua@leaderonomics.com

We consume a lot of energy daily – from charging our multiple electronic devices to the air-conditioning that we nonchalantly turn on whenever it becomes too warm for our comfort. Many of us don’t think much about it, and might even take for granted the fact that we have electricity at the mere flip of a switch – but what is the impact of our energy consumption habits?

A Pwc report that takes a look at the competing forces shaping the year 2030, forecasts that the demand for energy will increase by as much as 50 per cent by then.

The foundation for this scenario is based on one of the megatrends identified by Pwc, which projects that depleted fossil fuels will lead to a scarcity of resources, while climate change is inevitable as extreme weather becomes more common and sea levels continue to rise.

The report also projects that new types of jobs will have to be created to cope with these needs, especially in the areas of alternative energy, new engineering processes, product design, and waste management and re-use.

As a result, traditional energy industries will see a rapid restructuring, which will in turn affect the millions of people employed by them.

Many countries are already making the shift from traditional energy to renewable sources such as wind, water, geothermal and solar energy.

In a bid to become the first nation to be free of fossil fuels, Sweden decided to boost investments in solar, wind, energy storage, smart grids and clean transport in 2015.

Costa Rica – a country famed for generating approximately 99 per cent of its electricity from renewable resources – set a record in 2017 by producing electricity using only clean energy for 300 consecutive days, and has its sights on becoming a fossil-fuel-free nation by 2021.

RENEWABLE ENERGY IN MALAYSIA

Malaysia, however, still has a long way to go in terms of fully embracing renewable energy – especially when it comes to businesses.

While a number of small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) – especially those that utilise large amounts of energy – have turned to solar energy to power their buildings and factories, most of them do so to cut their operating costs, and not for environmental reasons.

Plus Solar Systems chief executive officer (CEO) Ko Chuan Zhen (pic) identifies four factors that contribute to the shift towards solar energy: lower operating costs, tax incentives by the government, brand positioning, and corporate social responsibility (CSR).

However, the priority given to each factor is highly dependent on the respective companies and their business strategies.

Ko says that environmental sustainability is not a priority for most Malaysians, even though they are aware of the need to be environmentally-friendly.

“Most people want to solve their pain points first, and it’s only after they see the returns that they will go ahead with it (solar energy). If it happens to be environmentally-friendly, then why not? But most of the time, this is not the main reason that business owners go for solar energy.”

Some SME owners also really like to explore technology and want to differentiate their business from the rest, which is why they look into solar energy – it’s really about the positioning of their brand,” adds Ko.

CHALLENGES IN MAKING THE LEAP

There are two main challenges in encouraging local SMEs to move away from traditional energy sources to clean energy, according to Ko.

1 Awareness

SME owners may not see how investing in solar technology can help their business in the long run, especially since they would have to fork out a large sum without seeing immediate returns on their investment.

However, Ko disagrees: “I would say that investing in solar infrastructure right now is pretty affordable; businesses will be able to break even in a little over four years.”

This means that businesses will be able to generate energy for free throughout the next few decades – long after their investment in solar infrastructure has broken even.

Ko says: “They’re essentially paying their electricity bills for the next 25 years today – the price of energy will be locked down, and when utility prices increase in the future, their operating costs won’t really be affected.”

The Malaysian government has also been doing its part to support the transition to more sustainable sources of energy, by providing tax incentives for businesses that invest in green technology.

“The initiative was launched by the Malaysian Investment Development Authority (Mida) back in 2015, but many business owners may not be aware of it, and so they do not take advantage of it,” shares Ko.

“This lack of awareness on government policies that support green technology may also be the reason that SMEs are slow to adopt solar technology.”

2 Financial constraints

Despite the reducing price of solar infrastructure over the years, it can still be quite expensive and difficult for SMEs to afford. As a consequence, they naturally shy away from it.

To help businesses make the switch to clean energy, Ko says that Plus Solar cooperates with banks to facilitate financing solutions for their clients, making it a lot easier for SMEs to get the loans they need to implement their solar energy projects.

“In fact, in most cases, businesses will be able to have a positive cash flow even though they have to service a loan during that period,” claims Ko.

CONTRIBUTING TO SUSTAINABILITY

Ko likens Plus Solar to an ‘energy doctor’ who studies a building’s energy consumption patterns, diagnoses the cause of the problem, and provides the solution – which, in most cases, starts off with the installation of solar energy infrastructure.

He elaborates: “Unlike many other companies, we continue to serve our clients in the long term with our other energy-efficient solutions – this is important because business owners want to sustain and continue improving their building’s energy-saving measures.”

“We help them do this by monitoring their consumption patterns, which will help them save energy throughout the next 20 to 30 years,” says Ko.

Ko adds that in the last five years, Plus Solar has helped more than 700 building owners convert a portion of their energy source to solar power. The total power generated by these buildings, which are located throughout Peninsular Malaysia and Sabah, is more than 100 megawatt peak (MWp).

Ultimately, Plus Solar aims to be at the forefront of the evolving energy industry, and help businesses cut operating costs while also reducing their impact on the environment.

Getting the whole country to shift towards renewable energy as its main energy source will take a lot of effort, but Ko is optimistic about the future.

“Solar energy is still in its early stages in Malaysia, but a lot more people are venturing into it compared to five years ago.”

Ko says that the future energy trend will be true energy independence, and in this period of energy transition, three things will happen.

The first is decarbonise, which means that everything will eventually ‘go green’. The second is decentralise, where energy generation plants will become more community-based – or even individualised, such as having solar panels on your roof – thus making the energy source more efficient and economical.

The third is digitalise: with the advent of technology such as the Internet of Things (IoT) and artificial intelligence (AI), it has become easier than ever to monitor and analyse energy consumption.

“These 3Ds will be the future of the energy sector, which is quite exciting. This is already happening in developed countries, in fact, it’s already happened in Malaysia, but it’s still in the very early stages,” says Ko.

“This is the value that Plus Solar brings to the country and to all SME business owners – using clean energy will not only benefit business operations, it will benefit Malaysia as a whole as well,” concludes Ko.
SOLID waste is one of the three major environmental problems in Malaysia. This puts a great amount of strain on our ecosystem and our own well-being.

At present, over 23,000 tonnes of waste is produced in Malaysia every day. We are also the eighth worst producer of plastic waste in the world.

The amount of waste generated continues to increase due to the increasing population and development – and only less than 5 per cent of the waste is being recycled.

Co-founder of Zero Waste Malaysia, Sue Yee Khor and members Tina Yap and Yeong Sze Ern shared their organisational waste management strategies.

Zero Waste Malaysia is a non-profit organisation that began in 2016 with the vision of furthering the Zero Waste Movement in Malaysia. They provide a platform for Malaysians to share and learn how to generate less waste and organise Zero Waste events.

One of the key ways to tackle this issue on the ground is to simply reduce our own output of waste. The first step is finding out exactly how much of it is created, where the waste is coming from, and how the waste is being generated. However, this can be tricky in an office setting because offices use significantly more resources than homes. A typical office, for example, may contribute up to two pounds of waste paper, per employee.

Yeong shares that her organisation has formed a Go Green committee made up of a group of employees who look for ways to reduce waste and advocate green initiatives across the organisation.

“Employers and leaders need to share their commitment with the whole organisation and display their efforts in reducing their waste publicly. This can range from initiatives at the top level like including green initiatives as part of the organisation’s policies, to the basic act of practising what you preach and encouraging employees to get involved,” she shares.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

These are some of the actions Khor, Yeong and Yap shared that you and your company can take today.

1. Educate yourself on the big sources of waste in Malaysia and its impact.
2. Evaluate your sources of waste and discuss as a team, how to reduce it.
3. Incorporate a zero-waste culture into your work climate as the organisation’s commitment through intentional office practice, campaign or policy: instil the idea of the refusing and reducing lifestyle.

Simple actions make a real difference. Organisations, corporate and others, can start with the small things such as replacing all single-use items with reusable ones. Encourage employees to keep things as digital as possible to reduce paper usage.

CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY

“Leadership requires the courage to make decisions that will benefit the next generation.” – Alan Autry

Beyond our corporate social responsibility, communities and nations succeed when everyone has a sense of civic duty and responsibility to one another.

In the case of the environment, this is especially true as our actions do not exist in a vacuum, but instead, impact the wellbeing of others and ourselves.

With a worldwide call to ‘Go Green’, sustainable business practices should consider not only the use of resources in production, but also the assurance that those resources can be replenished for future use.

Khor says that actions speak louder than words, and that is why Zero Waste lives by the principles of the 5Rs (Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Rot) in order to create a sustainable workplace. The feasibility of each depends on the organisation.

However, implementing a waste management plan is essential to any zero-waste office programme. Products such as paper, plastic, and even leftover food can be put towards recycling or composting programmes.

“If the practice of refusing is hard, setting up a waste segregation area works. Products such as paper, plastic, and even leftover food can be put towards recycling or composting programmes.

Khor adds, “Reducing waste from going into landfills is essentially a form of social justice. Land degradation and climate change severely impacts rural communities and those living in poverty. They are defenceless as rural areas lack mitigation strategies and basic facilities. An accountable organisation should constantly seek opportunities to encourage and empower employees to mobilise for positive change.”

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Yeong shares, “The change that is required to reverse the negative impact we’ve had on the environment has to be collective – as a community which requires systemic change and this of course, involves organisations.”

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“If the practice of refusing is hard, setting up a waste segregation area works best as an alternative. For door-step collection at the workplace, the employer can utilise companies like Recircle, a mobile recycling application that makes recycling more convenient.”

Yeong shares that her organisation has formed a Go Green committee made up of a group of employees who look for ways to reduce waste and advocate green initiatives across the organisation.

They recently launched a Tapao Corner where unused containers and recyclables are kept and are eventually donated to i-Cycle – a waste separation and recycling solution provider.

Yeong and Yap shared that you and your company can take today.

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DO YOUR PART TO SAVE THE PLANET

By KAWAR WISH MUH
kawar@leaderonomics.com

There is a global growth in awareness surrounding the plight of the environment. “Environmental protection”, “environmental awareness”, and “the environment” are no longer just catchphrases. Environmental NGOs and two-huggers are cropping up everywhere, and we contribute to the destruction of nature and earth. Even though we have not picked up an axe to cut down a tree or shot a tiger, we are contributing to a slower rate of forest degradation through consumption. Our demands as consumers are the impetus behind the industries that generate the products that we want to buy.

REDUCING OUR ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The good news is that there is no need for us to dig into our greenhouses or face painter, nature lover, enthusiastic and environmental aware citizens to save the planet. We often send powerful messages through various approaches, but do you have to reflect on what we are contributing and communities can do to stop the destruction?

Efficient transportation choices

Plan your daily commute. Plan your shopping trips, or pick up your kids off at school, or running errands, try to use a whole vehicle with someone else, or combine several journeys into one. This will go a long way in helping to reduce traffic on the road. It is possible, if not easy, to walk or cycle instead of driving to places nearby. Walking and cycling not only work wonders for the environment, but they also provide you with some exercise. Challenge yourself to plan the most efficient route, share a vehicle, or carpool to get to work each need.

Do your part to save the planet

If your car guzzles petrol, it might be worth what to consider changing to a more energy-efficient model. However, you should prepare a proper survey of all the models within your budget range and also consider the advantages and disadvantages of changing to a new car before making your final decision. You might not be able to get what you want if your car has a petrol engine.

Reduce your water usage

There are many ways you can use less water: such as reducing your shower time, don’t leave the tap running when brushing your teeth or washing the dishes, use the washing machine only with a full load, and filling the bottle with only the exact amount of water you need. It is also advisable to clean your car: you can opt to use water in a pad, rather than water from a hose. The same can be said for watering plants, where a watering can will come in very handy.

Wash your clothes in cold water

With today’s detergent, clothes will get clean whether you wash them in hot or cold water. However, opt for cold water instead, because hot water uses five times more energy. If you wash clothes in warm water, you will consume a lot of energy for a small effect. Avoid using electric drying machines, as they use a lot of energy. Your clothes will dry just as quickly if you hang them up to dry in the sun. However, if you live in a hot climate, a tumble dryer may be needed. If you opt for a washing machine, choose a more energy-efficient model.

Ten ways to reduce your carbon footprint

1. Change your light bulbs

If your light bulb is over 60 watts, you are using 60% more power than necessary. Replace your incandescent bulb with a LED bulb of 60 watts for the same amount of light. In fact, LEDs are at least 60% more efficient than incandescent bulbs.

2. Save on vehicle fuel consumption

A gallon of gasoline is enough to drive for about 20 miles, while a gallon of diesel is enough to drive for about 30 miles. To save on fuel, try to combine two or more trips that you need to make.

3. Consider buying a fuel-efficient car

When you want to buy a new car, check out the fuel economy of the car you want to buy. Fuel-efficient cars will save you money on fuel costs, as well as reduce your carbon footprint. Fuel-efficient cars are cars that use 20% less fuel than the average car.

4. Change your eating habits

The average American consumes 1700 calories per day. If you eat a balanced diet, you should be consuming 1200 calories per day. An average American consumes 2500 calories per day. This means that you are consuming 50% more calories than you need.

5. Use electricity wisely

This way, you will be reducing your carbon footprint. Remember, a kilowatt hour of electricity is enough to power your television for about 1 hour. This means that you can save a significant amount of energy by reducing your electricity consumption.

6. Use public transportation

Public transportation is cheaper than owning a car. It is also more environmentally friendly. If you live in a city, try to use public transportation to get to work. If you live in a rural area, try to carpool with someone else.

7. Use reusable bags

Instead of using plastic bags, use reusable bags. This way, you will be reducing your carbon footprint. Plastic bags are not biodegradable, and they take hundreds of years to decompose.

8. Use energy-efficient appliances

Energy-efficient appliances are designed to use less energy than their counterparts. If you replace your old appliances with energy-efficient appliances, you will be reducing your carbon footprint. For example, an energy-efficient refrigerator will use 20% less energy than a standard refrigerator.

9. Use water-efficient appliances

Water-efficient appliances are designed to use less water than their counterparts. If you replace your old appliances with water-efficient appliances, you will be reducing your carbon footprint. For example, an energy-efficient washing machine will use 50% less water than a standard washing machine.

10. Recycle

Recycling is a great way to reduce your carbon footprint. Recycling reduces the amount of waste that goes to landfills, and it also reduces the amount of energy that is used to produce new products.

Do Your Part to Save the Planet

If you are looking for a quick and easy way to reduce your carbon footprint, try one of these simple tips. These tips are easy to do, and they will make a big difference.

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Water-efficient appliances are designed to use less water than their counterparts. If you replace your old appliances with water-efficient appliances, you will be reducing your carbon footprint. For example, an energy-efficient washing machine will use 50% less water than a standard washing machine.

3. Recycle

Recycling is a great way to reduce your carbon footprint. Recycling reduces the amount of waste that goes to landfills, and it also reduces the amount of energy that is used to produce new products.

4. Use public transportation

Public transportation is cheaper than owning a car. It is also more environmentally friendly. If you live in a city, try to use public transportation to get to work. If you live in a rural area, try to carpool with someone else.

5. Use reusable bags

Instead of using plastic bags, use reusable bags. This way, you will be reducing your carbon footprint. Plastic bags are not biodegradable, and they take hundreds of years to decompose.

6. Use energy-efficient appliances

Energy-efficient appliances are designed to use less energy than their counterparts. If you replace your old appliances with energy-efficient appliances, you will be reducing your carbon footprint. For example, an energy-efficient refrigerator will use 20% less energy than a standard refrigerator.

7. Use water-efficient appliances

Water-efficient appliances are designed to use less water than their counterparts. If you replace your old appliances with water-efficient appliances, you will be reducing your carbon footprint. For example, an energy-efficient washing machine will use 50% less water than a standard washing machine.

8. Recycle

Recycling is a great way to reduce your carbon footprint. Recycling reduces the amount of waste that goes to landfills, and it also reduces the amount of energy that is used to produce new products.

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CAN BUSINESSES IMPROVE SOCIETY?

By GEOFFRY E JONES
geoffreyjones@leaderonomics.com

For businesses and other organizations seeking to overcome roadblocks to sustainability, there are a few key questions that need to be addressed. In this article, we explore some of the main challenges and opportunities that businesses face today and how they can work to overcome these roadblocks.

Roadblocks to progress

Participants expressed the need for businesses to take an active role in promoting environmental awareness, and for businesses to be more proactive in identifying and addressing sustainability challenges. This is especially important for large corporations, which have the resources and influence to make a significant impact.

DAVID BEAUMONT
Managing Director
Greenhouse Gas Management

The problem is not just about the financial costs of addressing sustainability, but also the cultural and societal barriers that prevent businesses from taking action. This is one reason why it is important for businesses to be proactive in identifying and addressing sustainability challenges.

SURESH SINGH
Chief Sustainability Officer
Bluebell Environmental

Business leaders need to take a leadership role in addressing sustainability challenges, and to work with stakeholders to develop solutions that are both effective and feasible. This is especially important if businesses are thinking about how to use sustainability as a tool to drive innovation and growth.

EMILY MILLER
Director of Sustainability
Greenhouse Gas Management

What can businesses do to help?

Businesses can play a vital role in encouraging and enabling sustainable practices. This can be done by providing incentives for employees to work more sustainably, by investing in research and development of new technologies, and by working with suppliers to improve their sustainability practices.

SOLUTIONS ARE BECOMING MORE COMPLEX

However, the more complex society becomes, the more challenges arise. In this article, we explore some of the main challenges and opportunities that businesses face today and how they can work to overcome these roadblocks.

1. The challenge of scale

The challenge of scale is one of the main challenges that businesses face today. It is difficult for businesses to work at a large scale, especially when they are trying to implement sustainable practices. This is because businesses often have to work with a large number of suppliers and contractors, and it can be difficult to get everyone on board.

2. The challenge of complexity

The challenge of complexity is another challenge that businesses face today. There are a lot of different factors that need to be taken into account when trying to implement sustainable practices. This is because businesses need to take into account the needs of their customers, the needs of their suppliers, and the needs of their employees.

3. The challenge of cost

The challenge of cost is another challenge that businesses face today. It can be difficult for businesses to afford the costs of implementing sustainable practices. This is because businesses often have to spend a lot of money on new technologies, new equipment, and new training programs.

4. The challenge of culture

The challenge of culture is another challenge that businesses face today. It can be difficult for businesses to change their culture to one that is more sustainable. This is because businesses often have a culture that is focused on short-term profits, and it can be difficult to change this culture.

5. The challenge of regulation

The challenge of regulation is another challenge that businesses face today. There are a lot of different regulations that need to be taken into account when trying to implement sustainable practices. This is because businesses need to make sure that they are in compliance with all of the different regulations that apply to their industry.

6. The challenge of innovation

The challenge of innovation is another challenge that businesses face today. It can be difficult for businesses to come up with new ideas and new solutions to sustainability challenges. This is because businesses often have a culture that is focused on short-term profits, and it can be difficult to come up with new ideas.

SUSTAINABILITY AS A TOOL TO DRIVE INNOVATION AND GROWTH

Businesses can use sustainability as a tool to drive innovation and growth. This can be done by providing incentives for employees to work more sustainably, by investing in research and development of new technologies, and by working with suppliers to improve their sustainability practices.

Businesses can use sustainability as a tool to drive innovation and growth. This can be done by providing incentives for employees to work more sustainably, by investing in research and development of new technologies, and by working with suppliers to improve their sustainability practices.
Millennials Want You to Be a Better Leader

By MARK C. CROWLEY
editor@leaderonomics.com

AFTER more than a decade of effort, businesses still have not figured out how to succeed with millennials and keep — millennial workers. According to a Gallup study, employees aged 20 to 36 years old are the least engaged generation in the workplace by far. On top of that, 21 per cent quit their jobs last year, and 60 per cent say they’re floating their resumes right now. For all the companies that tried to win over their Gen Y workers by paying down their student loan bills, introducing free energy drinks and making the hoodie acceptable office attire, these stats may seem galling. Perhaps we should all just accept that this is simply a group of needy and entitled people who will never be truly happy or loyal at work? Not so fast.

Gallup’s research reminds us that millennials are not up very differently than previous generations, and have a unique set of values, needs and work preferences.

What’s evident is that this is no slacker class, nor are they hardwired to be disillusioned. They are demanding.

They know very clearly what they want in exchange for their work, and have proved very willing to keep looking until they find it. Remarkably, this is a generation of workers that reject traditional ways, and fully expects their bosses and organizations to adapt to them. It’s a stunning fact that millennials already represent 40 per cent of the American workforce, and will double that number within just 10 more years.

While some of us may have resisted changing how we lead in response to the demands of millennial workers, the conclusion of the research is that we must act now.

Importantly, the most progressive organizations are already on this way.

WHAT SHAPED THE MILLENNIAL MINDSET?

Last year, Gallup published How Millennials Want To Work And Live, an in-depth look at what defines millennials as employees. After digesting all 150 pages, I sat down with Gallup’s long-term research director, Dr Jim Harter, and asked him to explain the key life experiences that shaped the Gen Y personality. Here are the big three:

1. They observed the work-driven stress levels of their parents. As children, many millennials came home from school to an empty house (latch-key children) and felt the brunt of not having their parents readily available.

They saw how a 40-hour work week came to represent the bare minimum expected by organisations, and how their parent’s stress levels often proved toxic. The millennial pivot: A generation far less willing to sacrifice their lives for work. They want to be judged on their results, not time spent on the clock.

2. Traveling teams and helicopter parents.

While the Baby Boomers and Gen X generation grew up as a league and soccer growing up — one activity at a time — millennials had their children over-scheduled. They participated in cheerleading camps, Taekwondo, music lessons, water polo, and highly competitive travelling teams often at the same time.

Perhaps in response to not being able to spend time with them during the workweek, parents attended all of their children’s weekend events – praising and encouraging them all along the way. The millennial pivot: A generation that needs much more frequent feedback and approval, and expects highly personalized attention from their bosses.

3. They’re the most technologically connected generation, ever.

This is the first generation to grow up with immediate and broad access to information due to technology. And because of social media, millennials are not only far more travelled and exposed to the leadership cultures at other organisations. They may also operate with an ideological assumption that whatever they want should happen quickly.

REINVENTING HOW ORGANISATIONS LEAD

Gallup has identified a list of key functional characteristics that organisations must make in order to successfully influence millennial workers.

Gallup finds they also represent a comprehensive redefinition of what all 21st-century workers seek from work today. Millennials believe their first generation to insist upon them:

1. They want to know their work has purpose.

“Deep inside of us there is a primal desire to do something important in life,” said Oracle chief executive officer, Larry Ellison, and fulfilling this need is a huge driver of millennial engagement. Gallup’s data proves that millennials are not a generation that wants everything handed to them, nor do they prioritize having a fun workplace over their own growth, development and feelings of fulfillment.

“What they want,” Harter told me, “is to know their work matters.”

They want accountability and a sense of significance through their own accomplishments.

As someone who brilliantly led an entire workforce of millennial employees, Google’s former head of people, Laszlo Bock sized it up this way: “Over the coming decades, the most gifted, hardest working people on the planet will gravitate to workplaces where they can do meaningful work and help shape the destiny of organisations.”

2. They don’t want a boss; they want a coach.

There once was a day in business when we believed people didn’t want to work and needed constant coercing to remain productive.

But millennials have a deep desire to make their lives meaningful through work.

As a result, they tend to set very high goals for themselves, take ownership for their successes, and want to be held personally accountable.

Tied to this phenomenon, Gen Y workers are rebelled by traditional bosses who bark orders or manage people in uniform ways.

“This a generation that comes into the workforce expecting not just to have a good boss,” Harter told me, “but a boss who’s a good coach, too. Coaches drive performance by being approachable human beings. They get to know people as a whole person. They discover what they’re best at, mentor their job growth, and provide ongoing feedback. They’re advocates.”

As evidence of why the United States engagement remains strikingly low, Gallup believes very few people today have this kind of boss.

Noting that the mindset of a ‘coach’ tends to be more supportive, caring, and nurturing to people than what we’ve traditionally expected of workplace managers, I asked Harter if businesses would be wise to formally rename the role.

“If the expectation is that managers should act like coaches,” he told me, “then why not just call it that?”

3. They want much more frequent feedback.

Research shows that most organisations today give employees an annual performance review — a discussion where managers devote more attention to correcting someone’s weaknesses rather than focusing on their strengths.

And in the experience of millennials, that’s like getting a bad report card in June without any other update all year. “This is a generation that needs and expects much more frequent communication than that,” Harter told me, “knowledge that may make some leaders brittle.

“But if the ultimate job of a manager is to improve performance in the organisation, then giving people more consistent feedback just means they’re doing their job.”

And what is it millennials need to hear from their bosses? Beyond recognition, they’re looking clarity. Are they working on the right things, succeeding, and making a difference?

Gallup believes twice-a-year formal reviews have become the minimum for businesses today, and that routine check-ins are a highly effective way of sustaining trust and connection. While it’s clear millennials don’t really need a lot of trophies, they nevertheless do need a lot of love.

Focus on their strengths.

Gallup did a study recently and asked people to re-live their previous work week. What they discovered is that workers who had the highest engagement were able to use their strengths four times more often than things they did less well.

“In many cases, the jobs we give people don’t match up to how they’re advertised,” Harter told me, “and this is an easy and direct way of losing their commitment right out of the gate. While we cannot ignore a person’s weaknesses, the wisest leaders are ones who discover which each person different and then tailor their job to their strengths.”

Growth and development is one of the greatest drivers of millennials engagement. It was Yeats who said, “We are happy when we are growing,” and science bears him out. When people feel they’re in a constant state of maximising their own human potential, they tend to be extremely engaged in their jobs.

As the best educated generation of all time, millennials are also highly attuned to their need for growth and want to envision their futures. They want to know where they stand, where they’re going, and how they’ll be supported in getting there.

“A manager’s job going forward has to be focused on development as much as it is on performance,” Harter insists. “Development leads to performance and giving people more feedback leads to tighter relationships.”

CONCLUSION

Some organisations seem to have it in their minds that millennial workers are mercenaries, always looking for a new and better deal. But Gallup’s research shows what they’re really looking for is a compelling reason to stay.

When Gen X workers were at the same stage of life as where most Gen Y employees are today, they actually job-hopped more frequently.

But there came a day when they made a long-term commitment to one organisation — a decision many millennials themselves are getting ready to make.

And where they’ll land will likely be in response to how you choose to lead.
I was recently interviewed by an online media platform regarding what I’d learnt in 35 years as an entrepreneur.

That question made me stop and reflect, and I came up with 10 key points that summarise what I’ve learnt along the way — my most profound realisations.

Now, whilst this list is by no means definitive, it comes on the back of tens of thousands of hours working in my business, working with thousands of individuals, and of course, writing 13 bestselling books on the topic of doing business better.

These 10 points are what I would offer:

**1. Put all of your eggs into one basket**
We live in a world where we need to be known for something. We need to be the ‘go-to person’ or the ‘go-to business’ in our particular niche.

This means being the best at what you do, and the best way to achieve this is to master your craft.

Being the ‘go-to person’ means an endless supply of referrals, better customers, more money, and a business you control – not one that controls you. People who master their craft and aspire to be the best in their space enjoy the rewards their entire life.

**2. Change is passive, evolution is powerful**
Change is the buzzword that we are sick of hearing. To me, change is a defeatist term, meaning we have to make do with what we have.

Evolution is Powerful – everyone. I don’t think this really needs to be explained.

**3. Take absolute responsibility**
Everything catches up with you eventually.

Putting off the big and difficult things in your business is a major mistake. The longer you ignore them, the worse they become.

I’ve made many mistakes over the years – not sacks a client, not sacks a member of my team, ignoring my tax responsibilities, not chasing outstanding accounts and so on.

They all caught up with me and ultimately, they were far worse when I finally took responsibility and action. Deal with the tough stuff quickly.

**4. Why not make it you?**
Many – if not most – small businesses undercharge. There are lots of reasons why, mostly to do with self-worth.

For some business owners, their entire marketing strategy is to be the cheapest. If this is your strategy, you will never get ahead financially. Someone has to be the most expensive – why not make it you?

The key is: if you are the most expensive, you have to exceed every customer expectation and this most certainly doesn’t happen by accident. It takes commitment, investment, courage and tenacity.

Bottom line, if you are going to be the most expensive, you have to be the best.

**5. Failure follows fiscal folly**
Very few small businesses know how much it costs them to operate each point in time.

In fact, you really have to wait for your taxes to be done by your accountant, once per year. Not being ‘into’ bookkeeping or understanding your figures is the equivalent of driving a car with a blindfold on.

It is your responsibility to know your numbers, and if you don’t embrace this responsibility, it will cost you dearly.

**6. Lay down with dogs, you get up with fleas (and mange)**
I can’t emphasise enough how important your peer group is.

If they are smart, motivated, energetic and supportive, stick to them like glue. If they are negative, lazy, critical and – most importantly – not successful, get as far away as possible, as quickly as possible.

Having a powerful peer group doesn’t happen by accident; it takes time, work, and commitment.

**7. Harden up**
No one ever said that running a small business was going to be easy.

Of course, it is tough; of course, it has its challenges; but a corporate career is no easier. The grass always seems greener on the other side – every other business appears easier than ours, every other business owner seems more capable, makes more money and so on, but in reality, it isn’t the case.

I think we just need to harden up and get on with it.

**8. Listen to your intuition more**
I think that as business owners, we actually develop really good intuition that can serve us wonderfully in many situations.

The problem is, we tend to override our intuition with logic and it rarely works out well – at least from my experience. I think we need to learn to listen to our intuition in every business situation.

The more we use it, the more it will protect us.

**9. Treat everyone with respect**
This is a big one for me. It’s absolutely imperative to treat everyone with respect.

This means your customers, staff, suppliers, advisors, competitors, community — everyone. I don’t think this really needs to be explained.

**10. Learn from those who have gone before you**
Last but not least, would be to spend as much time as possible learning from those who have gone before you.

There are so many incredible people who are incredibly successful, often under our noses, who would gladly share their wisdom with us. If I were to add one more, I would include “be careful of who you take advice from”.

We live in a world where there are lots of people willing to give advice, but I suggest that you do your homework, ask hard questions, and make sure the people you are getting advice from have actually achieved what it is they say they have.

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You’ll see us in print again on 27th October.

www.leaderonomics.com
By ROSHAN THIRAN  
roshan.thiran@leaderonomics.com

In the past two weeks, I received at least a dozen calls from chief executive officers (CEOs) of various organisations — small and big — requesting for help to facilitate their planning session for the upcoming year. Many of these ‘strategic retreat’ requests were essentially loaded with the usual complaints about how bad some of their employees’ performances were, the need to change mindsets, and many other issues, including lack of growth and complacency.

Many of these leaders believe that by having a ‘strategic retreat’, these issues can be ironed out and addressed. Are they correct in their belief that a retreat could be the magic bullet? A number of years ago, I developed a framework termed ‘the four constraints of an organisation’, where we identified four factors that contribute to employee frustration and disengagement. The four factors identified include leadership, culture, structure/processes, and business model.

**LEADERSHIP REQUIRES CLARITY**

One of the four elements identified is leadership. Every time I ask about leadership, I ask people to fill in the blanks in the statement below:

Above all, a leader must be ... Most people struggle to answer this question. Answers vary from humble, assertive, kind-hearted, a good listener, able to execute and, visionary, to many other answers. The one word I am looking for is this: CLEAR.

Above all, a leader must be clear. Clarity is one of the hardest things for leaders to do. The key role of a leader is to provide absolute clarity so that every employee in the company understands where the company is headed, what it is now, and what it must do to achieve its vision.

And when each leader in the leadership team has their own interpretation of what the goal is (vision, clarity), or what they are today (reality clarity), or what needs to be done today, next month, and next quarter (milestone clarity) then the organisation will be like a headless chicken; extremely busy and tired, but not achieving the milestones they set.

A strategic retreat is a great way for an organisation to take a ‘strategic pause’ and refocus to ensure clarity across every single leader in the leadership team and across the organisation. So, these CEOs are half right — if we get alignment across our leadership team, via a strategic retreat, half the battle is won. But there is more...

**PEOPLE GROW BEST INSIDE A COMPANY**

In 2006, Robert Haukman and Gary Pisano did a study amongst surgeons performing at various hospitals. Their research basically proved that these surgeons didn’t get better as they did more surgeries in various hospitals. They only got better when they kept doing the same surgery in the same hospital.

Another study by Groysberg, Lee, and Nanda conducted in 2008 on financial services found that when a top talent (they termed it ‘stars’) moved to a different company, their performance actually deteriorated and stayed low for at least five years.

In fact, their conclusion was that when we hire top talent from other companies, it is not “advantageous neither to the stars themselves, nor to the hiring companies”.

So, how is this related to a strategic retreat? A few months ago, my team at Leaderonomics took a break from helping others to focus on ourselves. We decided to spend time at our ‘strategic retreat’ to take a step back and look at ourselves. In the process, we learnt a lot about ourselves and our ‘secret sauce’ — including why we have been successful in the past and why we failed too.

This reflection helped many of our leaders better themselves and grow. And the organisation as a whole, benefited from this reflection.

As leaders reflect and learn and share, the entire company learns and grows together. And if this happens over many quarters and years, employees start to shine. However, if a ‘star’ employee moves to another organisation that has no alignment (clarity) and doesn’t understand its secret sauce (through reflection and group learning), this ‘star’ is highly likely to fail.

Organisations succeed, not because an employee is the most talented. It succeeds when everyone works in tandem and a cohesive fashion to achieve the big goals set out.

Retreats help us align, reflect and learn. But the final and most effective part of a retreat has to be the last reason I think strategic retreats have been so successful...

**EXECUTION AND ACTION**

The hardest part of any change initiative is to ensure it happens — execution.

One of the reasons why many retreats fail to achieve their outcome or drive change is because they fail to enable the organisations to execute.

Execution is key to success and many times, retreats are all talk and no action. How do we ensure that this does not happen at your strategic retreat? The answer lies in making execution an organisational habit.

In his powerful book, *The Power of Habit*, Charles Duhigg teaches us that organisations that habitually execute have learnt to build it as part of their DNA. These ‘movements don’t emerge because everyone suddenly decides to face the same direction at once. They rely on social patterns that begin as the habits of friendship, grow through the habits of communities, and are sustained by new habits that change participants’ sense of self’.

At retreats, we learn to harness the power of execution. When we do it collectively as a community of friends and follow through, this slowly becomes an organisational habit.

If we have retreats quarterly to obtain clarity, reflect on losses and wins, understand our ‘secret sauce’, and learn how to execute on follow-ups and plans, we will slowly start to see our company move towards achieving our goals and objectives.

**FINAL THOUGHTS**

It is not the end then why many CEOs swear by these strategic retreats as their magic bullets. However, just organising a retreat for the sake of having one will not give you the success you crave.

It has to have key objectives and clarity of focus to ensure it is not a boon dog or a waste of time and resources. I know! I know! In my next few weeks of my life is going to be spent traveling around the world helping organisations become clearer, smarter, wiser, and more aligned to achieve greatness. In this upcoming year, I see it as it is a great way to drive high impact in a short time span.

Have fun in your planning for the next year! And have a good time with your teams during your ‘strategic pauses’.

Read more about the four constraints at: bit.ly/FourConstraints

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**It’s been my experience that the most successful leaders have an altered state of awareness about December. They see the month as the true start of the new year, and purposely work very hard to lay the foundation for high achievement way before Auld Lang Syne gets sung. Check this article out: bit.ly/SuccessNewYear**

Roshan Thiran is the CEO of Leaderonomics and is looking forward to the months of November and December where he and his team will be busy running retreats for organisations all over the world. To enquire about strategic retreats for your organisation, contact Caroline at info@leaderonomics.com.

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**Plan your 2019 strategy today. Let us help you get there.**
A little anxiety keeps you on your toes. Unease makes you alert and helps you bring your best to challenges and opportunities.

But unanswered anxiety spirals out of control. One fear cascades into another. The list keeps growing until paralysis sets in.

I recently spoke to a newly promoted plant manager. He earned his promotion because he’s competent, but he’s also filled with anxiety about his new challenge.

Anxiety asks, “What if you aren’t enough?”

Frankly, if you don’t feel at least a bit anxious when your world shifts, you need a wake-up call. I still don’t sleep well before giving presentations. It’s been years, and sometimes my stomach hurts before I walk on stage.

Maybe you have the gift of anxiety. You think of everything that will go wrong, worry about surprises, and struggle to prepare for an unpredictable future.

Anxiety whispers, “This really matters.” It searches for clarity and certainty, but in an unpredictable world, you feel like the lights are out. Anxiety can be a decision-making tool.

HOW TO USE THE FEAR OF REGRET

Recently, I spoke to a woman who has the choice of keeping her current job or taking one that might present better opportunities. She knows there are no guarantees.

Anxiety thrives when the future is unpredictable. I asked her to imagine that both options will go badly. Whatever choice she makes, it won’t work as expected. Anxiety loves this way of thinking.

I said, “Assuming both options go badly, which one will you regret not taking?” This question helps people tap into their deeper fear.

Without hesitation she named one of the options. “I’ll most regret not taking the new opportunity.” The fear of regret helps you find clarity.

THE ANXIETY LIST

Creating an anxiety list will help you clarify decisions so that you can plan accordingly.

1. Don’t fight anxiety
   Invite it for coffee. Dig deep. What are your concerns? Write them down. Keep writing until you can’t think of anything else that could go wrong.

2. Look at your list and ask:
   “What do I really want?”
   Write down the things you really want beside each item on your anxiety list. The question, “What do I really want?” helps you shift from fear to values.

3. Finally, ask: “What do I need to do to get what I really want?”
   Limit yourself to things you can easily accomplish. Choose behaviours that match your strengths.

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

Stress isn’t necessarily a negative thing in itself and can be valuable within certain contexts. However, being under too much stress can cause considerable mental, physiological and physical problems over the short and long term. Having said that, we can work with our minds in a way to reduce unnecessary stress.

Read the article here: bit.ly/5CNegativeEmotions

A LITTLE ANXIETY IS GOOD
WHAT THE WILDERNESS TAUGHT ME

By SCOTT STEIN
editor@leaderonomics.com

I MAGINE being left in the wilderness completely on your own with only your wits to survive. On the first day, you are taught how to make a shelter and then your tent is taken away. The next day, you learn how to weave a grass mat and your sleeping bag is taken from you.

By the end of two weeks, you have nothing that you walked into the bush with besides the clothes on your back. Tom Brown Jr is America’s most acclaimed tracker and wilderness survival expert who himself was trained by an Apache elder named Stalking Wolf.

I was incredibly fortunate to learn from him over a 10-year period how to survive in the wilderness, with no manufactured tools in most cases, tapping into skills passed from generation to generation.

In this world of digital technology and artificial intelligence, many leaders are yearning for ways to manage the landscape forward into uncharted territory. Here are the insights leaders can rely on in uncertain times.

1. MORE FIRST-HAND INSIGHTS THAN ANY REPORT

At university, I became an adventure guide – leading canoeing, backpacking, white-water rafting and rock climbing trips. I read every survival book I could get my hands on.

After spending one hour being taught in the bush on my hands and knees, I quickly realised that things learnt in books were no match for what you can learn from first-hand experience.

Nothing you could read can capture the feeling of accomplishment you get when you rub sticks together to make fire or when you follow an animal track that leads you to a deer that is taking a drink of water from a stream.

Too many leaders get caught up in reporting and data that chains them to their desk. Understanding data is important, however without spending time listening to and observing your people, it is hard to pick up on the important things that the data will not tell you.

By simply watching staff implement a new process, you will notice the things that slow them down or frustrate them that were not identified during the planning stage.

To be able to keep a competitive advantage, you need to spend time gathering insights first-hand and working with your people to identify shortcuts to make things happen – not just reading key performance indicator (KPI) dashboards and reports.

2. SEEK WISDOM OF ELDERS

The stand up lean-to shelters you see in the movies will not keep you warm or dry. Native people teach how to make a debris hut, which is a small framework of branches that are interwoven and covered in leaves or plants that you crawl into.

When I built my first shelter, Brown Jr walked by and asked if I thought the amount of leaves were enough.

Spending the past two hours building a half-metre thick shelter led me to confidently say ‘yes’. I realised my mistake when I woke shivering from the cold at 2am because there was not enough debris or insulation on my shelter.

Having ignored the wisdom from an elder, or someone who has knowledge that you can learn from is often a mistake that many leaders make. Most chief executive officers know it can be isolating at the top.

However, having a number of elders or advisors that you can seek impartial and wise advice from can help you become a better leader and see the things that you don’t.

The next time you are faced with a challenge, remember these ancient wilderness survival principles that leaders have used since the dawn of time.

Scott Stein is a leadership pathfinder who has helped thousands of leaders implement fast-track strategies that improve results. He is a speaker and author of Leadership Hacks: Clever Shortcuts to Boost Your Impact and Results (Wiley). To get in touch with him, send an email to editor@leaderonomics.com.