DRIVING PRODUCTIVITY FOR THE NATION

3 LESSONS FROM LEADING A SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

4-7 MPC PAVING THE WAY FOR EFFICIENCY

8 RAISING INDEPENDENT CHILDREN
CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

HOW AND WHY IT IS NEEDED FOR THE FUTURE OF WORK

By NG YOU JING
editor@leaderonomics.com

Critical thinking is one of the essential skills that contributes to an individual’s career success, regardless of one’s profession. A study by Guthrie-Jensen Global Training Consultants shows that it is the second most vital skill we’ll need to thrive in 2020, after complex problem solving especially in the wake of Industry 4.0. Meanwhile, a skills survey by the American Management Association in 2012 indicates that only 40.6 per cent of surveyed employers rate their employees’ critical thinking skill as above average. The good news is that anyone can train their minds to think critically.

In essence, it’s the ability to analyse details and make rational judgements in order to solve problems. Other components of critical thinking like strategic thinking, design thinking, and analytical thinking are also important for leaders in the digital age, since they help build a strong foundation for better decision-making—yet another skill needed to thrive in the future of work.

Let’s dive deeper.

1 STRATEGIC THINKING

In the evolving VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous) world of work, the ability to make timely decisions to acclimatise and adapt to disruptions remains one of the top challenges in any industry. The concept of strategic thinking can be explained as a cognitive thinking process that involves a thorough assessment of the situation, therefore enabling one to deliver the most favourable decision. You need to look at the bigger picture when placed in the position of a decision-maker, especially in the business context. Before arriving at any conclusion, keep your stakeholders’ opinions and interests in your thinking process so that your decision will lead to a win-win situation.

Applying strategic thinking requires deep interactions with people. Essentially, it is expected of you to involve everyone in your team or across teams. The most important aspect of thinking strategically is to recognise the small details that make all the difference, through which you can seize the competitive advantages to achieve your goals.

2 DESIGN THINKING

Most people approach a situation by diving head first into the problem. Here’s where design thinking is quite unique—it focuses on the solutions.

To employ the art and design methodology into other areas of work, you must first develop a complete understanding of your target audience, for example your customers, to discover their unmet needs and design the best solutions to their challenges.

Design thinking allows you to stay innovative while minimising the risks that come with any new development. Be it to create a new workflow or introduce a new policy, you need to engage your stakeholders from the very beginning to understand their behaviours and challenges, instead of implementing solutions without trial.

From there, you’ll be able to monitor the effectiveness of your solution based on actual insights.

3 ANALYTICAL THINKING

To boost your critical thinking skill, pay attention to visual analytics too. It involves gathering, organising, and analysing information to identify the key areas that contain valuable insights. Oftentimes, you will need to work with various data sets or information sources to compare the pros and cons of each potential solution. Keep in mind the importance of acquiring quality and relevant data to avoid information overload.

Analytical thinking can be applied to any circumstance, especially in the problem-solving process.

CRITICAL THINKING IN THE WORKPLACE

Critical thinking is vital for the following functional roles:

1 Human resources (HR)

As HR function entails people engagement matters, it is expected of them to be the key to workplace harmony and employee well-being.

Therefore, the decision of whether to reward or reprimand employees should be based on facts and analytics.

Oftentimes, a manager needs to look at the overall team performance before assessing individual results. Critical thinking allows you to deliver fair assessment and avoid personal biases.

2 Marketing

Perhaps one of the most critical fields of work that requires critical thinking skills, marketing requires every aspect of the problem-solving process. A marketer who utilises strategic thinking to develop a smart marketing plan will yield better outcomes as compared to those who rely on pure assumptions.

The most crucial part of any marketing campaign is research, which requires not only data collection but also data analysis. Without such insights, you won’t be able to identify the optimum approach to reach and engage potential customers.

3 Sales

At the end of the marketing funnel lies the responsibilities of sales professionals, who are often faced with high expectations from potential customers. In this sector, you will understand the significance of buyer personas in developing the right pitch. Without relevant information and most importantly, design thinking approach, you will be less likely to close the deals.

APPLYING THE PROCESS

As you dive into the process, it is best to familiarise yourself with the characteristics of a critical thinker for better understanding.

1 Knowledge

You need to reflect on your past experiences of overcoming similar challenges. Don’t take impulsive actions. Think back about how you solved certain issues as a compass to determine the most effective strategies that will lead to a desired outcome.

Example of questions to get you started:

- What are the alternatives that I take a particular action?
- How would I manage it based on my understanding of the challenge?

2 Awareness

The objective now is to establish a comprehensive understanding of the current challenges in reference to the historical insights from the previous stage. You can learn to adopt critical thinking into the process of planning, differentiating, transcribing, and interpreting the obstacles that you are facing.

Better yet, look at it from different perspectives. This is the tipping point where critical thinkers differentiate between truth and perspective, cause and effect, and opinion and speculation.

Example of questions to get you started:

- What is the current situation?
- From which perspective should I observe this situation?
- How do I manage it based on my understanding of the challenge?

3 Application

Consider all the hypothetical solutions to overcome the challenge. It can be done by utilising your knowledge and use insights that you have attained from Steps 1 and 2.

Before taking any action, remind yourself not to settle for the first solution that comes to mind without exploring other ways. What matters is the possibility, not probability. It is important that you maintain an open mind, and be ready for a different route to obtain another solution.

Example of questions to get you started:

- What are the options I should consider to increase my chances of success?
- What is the potential outcome if I take a particular action?
- What are the alternatives that I should consider to achieve the most ideal results?

There are two more stages in the critical thinking process, head over to bit.ly/MVCriticalThinkingSkills to find out what they are and start putting these steps into practice.

---

SHARE WITH US YOUR THOUGHTS ON CRITICAL THINKING AND THE FUTURE SKILLS OF TONIGHT

Like this article? Follow us @leaderonomics on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram.
LEADING A SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

3 KEY LESSONS I’VE LEARNT IN MY 10 YEARS AT LEADERONOMICS

When I started this social enterprise, I had little knowledge of how to run one. Sure, I had decades of experience working across Asia, Europe and the US in leadership roles for companies such as General Electric, Johnson & Johnson and NBC Universal, but this was an entirely new ball game.

I went ahead with building the social enterprise anyway—`I’ve always preferred to learn by doing. As a friend once told me, “You’re the kind of guy who would jump out of an airplane and figure out how to build a parachute on the way down!”’ I’m 90 per cent sure he meant that as a compliment!

As we began our journey in mid-2008, the leadership team was initially driven solely by our vision to develop leadership in Malaysia here in Malaysia. Wherever you go, there’s just so much talent, and yet so many people were missing out on the kind of development that would truly make them flourish.

I wanted to change that and so, for the past 10 years, I’ve led a social enterprise whose members, both past and present, proudly made the vision their own and helped us to develop leaders across all levels, through many programmes and initiatives, be it in schools, universities, or through our popular leadership camps.

We also transitioned to help other companies and institutions nurture their own leadership pipelines and enhance their current leadership approaches. Everything we’ve done has been geared towards one shared goal: helping to make Malaysia the best it can be, by developing the leadership talent of tomorrow and extending a helping hand to those who need to be lifted up to see the limit-less talent they possess.

Circumstances should never limit a person’s growth, especially when they have the potential to pay so much forward to their communities and wider society.

So, what have I learnt over this past decade of being at the helm of Leaderonomics?

Here are three key lessons that have really opened my eyes up to what it means to follow your passion and bring your vision to life.

1. YOU HAVE TO BE PATIENT... BUT ALSO IMPATIENT

Whether it was setting up our media arm or our digital learning platform later on, I had people tell me the same thing: “You need to slow down and wait a while”. No doubt their advice was well-intended, but I don’t have the patience to wait. Why can’t something be done in three months instead of six? Why does something have to be so much slower when there’s a wonderful opportunity staring right at us?

While I’m impatient to get things going, I also have the patience to realise transformations don’t happen overnight. Even when we get ideas off the ground, we have to make what we deploy effective, and then we can start to see the results coming in.

If you expect major changes immediately, you’ll be sorely disappointed. Be impatient on the macro-level, but patient on the macro-level.

2. NEVER FEAR FAILURE – IT’S THE SUREST WAY TO LOSE FAITH

In Dan Brown’s book, Origin, an AI programme explains to his human companion that computers have one distinct advantage over humans: they never lose heart.

It describes how it could fail at a problem a billion times and still remain the same enthusiasm looking for a solution. Conversely, we humans tend to lose heart very quickly, and that can be so demotivating.

As Thomas Edison said, many of us quit just when success is starting to appear around the corner. Life is full of challenges, obstacles and setbacks – struggles are what make success taste so sweet when it comes. Never fear failure – learn from it, make it your teacher.

3. NEVER FORGET ‘YOUR WHY’

It can be so easy to get caught up in the daily tasks, meetings and other commitments when you lead an organisation, to the point where you lose perspective of why you signed up for this venture in the first place.

Whenever I feel myself getting critical or dismayed, a voice appears and reminds me, “Remember your reason for starting this journey... keep going”. Being reminded of the ‘Why of Leaderonomics’ helps me to refocus and renew my energy, ready to take on the next challenge, knowing that overcoming it will help to take the team closer to seeing our vision manifest.

Thank you to everyone who has been part of this amazing journey with us. As the African proverb says, if we want to go quickly, go alone; but if we want to go far, go together.

I appreciate everyone that I’ve met over this past decade who have shared their insights, given their support, and been so generous with their time and resources.

We really couldn’t have achieved what we have so far without your kindness, love and generosity. Your journeying with us has helped to transform more lives than you can imagine, and on that note, I’m left with only one more thing to say... Looking forward to your partnership with us as we journey through the next 10 years and beyond!

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? Check out this article on Leaderonomics.com.

**Roshan Thiran**

Roshan Thiran is the founder and CEO of Leaderonomics – a social enterprise working to transform lives through leadership development. Connect with Roshan on Facebook or Twitter (@lepakker) for more insights into business, personal development and leadership.
Collaboration: The Way Forward

The Changing Face of Retail and F&B

The Malaysia Productivity Corporation (MPC) has an enterprise level, along with information on their wayup.my. The Champions for the Malaysia Productivity Corporation, attributes this to the fact that the retail and F&B industries is surprisingly low, with research findings from the Department of Statistics showing that only around 10% of businesses have adopted the use of technology.

Datuk Bruce Lim, the Retail and F&B Productivity Nexus Champion for the Malaysia Productivity Corporation, attributes this to the fact that these industries are mainly made up of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and the owners of these businesses lack the productivity mindset.

THE PRODUCTIVITY MINDSET

Lim defines productivity as the value added over the number of people in the enterprise, and notes that this mindset is very rare among SMEs. SMEs are always about maximising profit and cutting cost as much as possible to increase margins. This is not productivity thinking, because you’re not thinking about the long-term; you’re just thinking of making profit,” he says.

Productivity thinking means being open to investing a little and waiting to see the returns over the long term – and the returns will be manifold, Lim assures.

While it is understandable that it is very difficult for SME owners to extricate themselves from the day-to-day operation of the business long enough to consider investing in areas that do not yield immediate return, they cannot afford to continue having this mindset if they want their businesses to flourish.

With the disruptions caused by technology, changing consumer habits, and the entry of the younger generations into the workforce, businesses owners who run traditional SMEs cannot continue with processes that are quickly becoming outdated, otherwise they will be left behind.

“A lot of retail chain owners – although successful – have found themselves being squeezed over the last five years or so. We used to respect the hypermarket guys, but now we meet these people because the economy is changing,” says Lim.

He notes that there are two distinct types of entrepreneurs currently in the industry.

● Those who have years of experience but have to change with the times, and;

● a new batch of entrepreneurs who lack experience but already have the right mindset.

What better way to tackle the industry’s issues than to have both these groups learn from each other?

This is what the Retail and F&B Nexus has been working towards over the past year through various initiatives – creating an ecosystem comprising experienced SME owners, new entrepreneurs, and even experts from outside the industry who are eager to rally together to drive change.

NEXUS INITIATIVES

1. Provide support for digitalisation of business operation and build e-commerce capabilities. An all-encompassing initiative was introduced in collaboration with the ICT Nexus – a three-month programme in which digital-savvy marketers coached SMEs on how to digitalise their business, from setting up their own web stores and navigating e-marketplaces, to using social media to drive traffic to their sites.

2. Provide opportunities for sharing economy. Another initiative is the e-procurement project, SMEs learn about big data from a fellow SME owner who has successfully digitised his business.

3. Strengthen retail and F&B competencies. Most of the people who work in retail and F&B may not have paper qualifications, but those who have been in the industry for a while are a lot more valuable to employers compared to a fresh graduate who has a diploma.

The focus is on recognising these workers’ previous work experience and having their skills certified with a Diploma Kemahiran Malaysia (DKM). The Department of Skills Development, or Jabatan Pembangunan Kemahiran (JPK) has played a large role in making this a reality. The nexus aims to have 200 existing workforce members awarded with DKM Level 4.

However, focusing only on the workforce is not enough – employers’ mindsets need to be changed too.

“This is the most important but also most difficult,” says Lim.

He identifies organisational culture as one of the main reasons Malaysians do not want to work in the retail and F&B industries. “Look at Starbucks; you see that young people don’t mind serving coffee – but why is it different when it comes to working at a mamak stall?”

Lim emphasises that organisational culture is not just built by the employees – it has to be led by the enterprise leader. This is why mindset change is crucial, because if employers ill treat their workers in a bid to reduce costs, the negative effects will eventually trickle down to their customers as well.

“While you create an excellent culture with a proper career pathway, you may see their jobs in a different light. It’s just a question of ownership, culture-build- ing, and career pathways that you need to inculcate – and it all starts with the enterprise owner,” states Lim.

4. Provide assistance to retail and F&B players to grow internationally. A major challenge that enterprises face in penetrating new markets is the lack of know-how, for example: not having the right connections, not being able to handle the logistics that come with scaling the business, and not knowing the business regulations in other countries.

“The F&B industry is burgeoning because we’re able to create great food that is distinctively Malaysian. We have up-and-coming F&B owners who have a growing number of outlets, but many of them are young and they don’t know how to export.”

This nexus aims to facilitate the process by connecting local SME owners with agents who have an international network. It is also working closely with the Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation (MATRADE) to provide loans for these SMEs so that they can expand their business.

This particular project has been launched yet as it is more complex, but the nexus hopes to introduce real interventions and create an ecosystem that can add value to the enterprises that take part in it.

IN CONCLUSION

Ultimately, the nexus hopes to introduce real interventions and create an ecosystem that can add value to the SMEs that are a part of it.

Lim explains that the traditional method of managing shopping malls is no longer as effective as it was, because of the entry of the younger generations into the workforce, and not knowing the business regulations in other countries. “Malls are more of a lifestyle area these days. People are no longer going to malls to buy things; they go for the experience, for the food. In fact, the utilisation of mall space for F&B has gone up.”

“We have to keep advocating new ways of doing things. We may start small due to certain constraints, but we dream big – and we hope to scale very fast.”
The Next Level of E&E

By KHOR HUI MIN and CHRISTIE CHUA
editor@leaderonomics.com

When you wonder what makes your electronic devices work the way they do, and where they came from? Chances are that at least one of the components in your various devices was locally here in Malaysia.

In the 1970s, the “Eight Samurai” (National Semiconductor, Intel, Advanced Micro Devices (AMD), OSLAM, Hewlett Packard, Bosch, Hitachi and Clarion) began operations at the Bayan Lepas Industrial Park in Penang.

Since then, some 300 multinational corporations (MNCs) have set up operations in Malaysia, creating an electronics and electrical (E&E) hub that has been likened to the Silicon Valley in the United States (US).

This is an important sub sector for Malaysia’s exports. In June 2018, E&E products (worth RM29.89 billion) comprised 38% of total exports, which was a significant increase of 6.9% from June 2017.

Electrical goods here include electrical meters and generators, domestic appliances, wiring, lighting and others. Meanwhile, electronics consist of computers and peripherals, electronic components and boards, communication equipment and consumer electronics.

Global Trends in E&E

The Electrical and Electronics Manufacturing Global Market Report 2018 revealed that the largest segment in the E&E manufacturing market worldwide was electrical equipment manufacturing, which had a market share of 55%.

This is due to the high sales volume and value of items manufactured, including switchboards, transformers, switchgear and electrical equipment.

The second largest segment was electronic products manufacturing, with a market share of 31%.

In 2017, Asia Pacific held 55% of the market share. Thus, it was considered to be the largest region in the electrical and electronics manufacturing market. North America came in second (17%), while Africa held the smaller share (around 3%).

In the quest to improve plant efficiency and productivity, companies have begun automating and using robotics.

“Sensors installed in machines have also improved the efficiency of factories, as they reduce potential breakdowns. As more people connect to the Internet from all over the world, the sales of connected electronic products will continue to rise, the Euromonitor International projected in its Consumer Electronics Global Industry Overview (2017).”

And as volume increases, retail value growth is expected, because consumers expect higher quality devices for the price they pay.

The industry is expected to experience robust growth due to fast innovation, shifting market frontiers, premiumisation and shopping being reinvented as an online experience.

However, even with the popularity of IoT, people will continue to buy laptops and LCD TVs. As these mature product categories are important to them.

Nonetheless, these categories are being reinvigorated by manufacturers to make them more premium, in order to increase profit margins.

The report also mentioned that artificial intelligence (AI) will continue to be integrated into electronic devices, to help consumers simplify their lives.

The Malaysian Scenario

According to the 25th Productivity Report 2017/2018, the E&E sub sector accounted for 36.7% of Malaysia’s total exports and 44.7% of Malaysia’s manufac- turing exports in 2017.

In fact, it was the largest export earner (RM343 billion). The top export destina- tions were Singapore, the US, China, Hong Kong, Japan, Germany, Mexico, India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Due to an industry-wide effort to trans- formation from low-value-added activities to high-value operations, the added value for E&E rose from RM6.26 billion in 2016 to RM67.7 billion last year. This shift was necessary for businesses to stay competitive in the global economy.

The continuous improvement and growth in the E&E sub sector – caused mainly by robust demand – has seen an increase of 5.8% in productivity to RM139,724 last year.

In addition, employment in the sub sector grew by 2.3% to 485,000 workers in 2017. This number constitutes 19.9% of the Malaysian manufacturing workforce.

Nonetheless, despite the positive developments, the Malaysian E&E sub sector continues to face challenges. Among them are:

- Significant improvement for criti- cal enablers to industry players
- A talent pool that lacks quality and experience
- Local companies that find it dif- ficult to compete globally
- Focus in assembly activities results in lower value-add
- Lack of focus in E&E capabilities across a range of sectors

“The large local companies (LLCs) and multinational corporations (MNCs) are already highly competitive. However, a big push is needed to change the mindset of the SMEs. It’s only when they break through that they can break through. They are stuck in the same position for a long time because they don’t have the mindset barrier towards Industry 4.0, and that productivity improvement is expensive.”

There is room for growth and improve- ment in the E&E sub sector. To help the companies to do what they think is important.

“Some companies will be willing to spend the required money, while some won’t. So, they will take fewer steps. But what is most important is that they are considering it.”

The E&E Nexus has set its sights on four key areas:

- Enhancing higher value-added activities, especially in design and development
- Nurturing the talent pool
- Accelerating the adoption of Industry 4.0
- Strengthening the development of SMEs

In our up-and-coming seminars, we want to showcase companies that have already done it, including Malaysian companies and MNCs based in Malaysia. We want to show them that it works, and it will help them to improve quality and productivity and save money,” says Wong.

Currently, there are three types of training available:

- Training for young-to-be-employed engineering graduates
- Master’s programme to upskill engineers
- Advanced engineering, which is a training programme to improve competitiveness.

Developing Global Managers

Talent development is important for any industry, including leadership pro- grammes for senior leaders (middle manag- ers and above).

However, local managers might encounter some problems when they want to become global managers.

The LCCs and MNCs are already highly competitive. However, a big push is needed to change the mindset of the SMEs.

“We have global managers, but their numbers are low. So, we intend to con- duct training to help local managers become global managers – to help our leaders to take the next step. This pro- gramme will be targeted at middle manag- ers, section managers and department managers,” says Wong.

“Also, in my consultations with Malaysian peers stationed in Shanghai, I discovered that there is a need for coach- ing and mentoring. This is because they might have a glass ceiling or threshold that they can’t break through. They are stuck in the same position for a long time and need to find a way to evolve to the next level,” he adds.

There is room for growth and improve- ment among the SMEs and engineering community in Malaysia.

With timely and adequate intervention and development programmes by the MPC, far more can be accomplished on a global scale.
CHALLENGES AHEAD

At the turn of the millennium, MPC, the registration body of engineering services in Malaysia, was established. It is tasked with standardising and practicing engineering services in Malaysia. As a result of the Malaysia’s privatisation drive, there is a growing demand for engineering services in the country. The establishment of the Engineering Act 1967 (Act 207) and the Malaysia Professional Services Act 2012 (MPSA) has led to the growth of engineering services in Malaysia. However, the regulations of the Act allow for a lot of flexibility and freedom in the practice of engineering services in Malaysia. The Act has also allowed for the establishment of various professional bodies, such as the Engineers and Architects Council Malaysia (EACM), the Architects and Engineers Council Malaysia (AECM), and the Malaysian Institute of Public Relations (MIPR). These professional bodies are tasked with regulating the practice of engineering services in Malaysia.

In the face of these challenges, the engineering services sector in Malaysia is facing a number of issues. The issue of talent shortage is one of the biggest challenges faced by the engineering services sector in Malaysia. According to the Malaysian Society of Engineers (MSE), the engineering services sector in Malaysia has a significant shortage of engineering professionals. The issue of talent shortage is compounded by the fact that many engineering professionals in Malaysia are leaving the country to work in more lucrative sectors.

Another challenge faced by the engineering services sector in Malaysia is the lack of awareness among potential clients of the quality of engineering services provided in the country. Many potential clients are not aware of the high level of quality of engineering services provided in Malaysia. As a result, there is a need for the engineering services sector in Malaysia to increase awareness among potential clients of the quality of engineering services provided in the country.

In conclusion, the engineering services sector in Malaysia is facing a number of challenges, including the issue of talent shortage and the lack of awareness among potential clients of the quality of engineering services provided in the country. However, the engineering services sector in Malaysia is well-positioned to overcome these challenges and continue to grow and thrive in the future.
Having the ability to think for one’s self and be in charge of shaping one’s experiences from a young age is crucial for the development of well-rounded leaders. It contributes to one’s self-esteem, identity and well-being. Read on to find out how to inculcate a sense of agency in your children.

[By Roshan Thiran and Eva Christodoulou]

In a recent study we conducted, we tried to find out how important it is for parents to help their children develop their sense of agency. Agency is the ability of children to act independently of what is happening around them, to be proactive and take the initiative to make choices for themselves and act according to these choices. We conducted an in-depth survey asking parents a series of questions as part of this study. One of the questions we asked was: “Do you take any steps to ensure your child develops into an independent individual?”

For this question, 3.5 per cent of respondents answered with a clear no, and an additional 5.3 per cent of respondents answered about the lines of ‘not yet,’ ‘not really,’ ‘not enough’, ‘haven’t thought about it’, and ‘need to work on it’. One per cent of respondents also mentioned that they ‘only believed in laissez faire’. The majority of respondents answered ‘yes’ and ‘cited getting their kids to do chores’ as the best way to do so (48 per cent), or ‘take up responsibility’ (13 per cent of responses), or ‘completing tasks’ (12 per cent of responses).

Their rationale is that chores, tasks, and some form of responsibility provides an avenue for the children to think on their own and conduct tasks independently. Thirty-two per cent of responses also revolved around the notion of letting children have their own opinions or being able to manage situations and make decisions on their own.

One of the respondents also mentioned in his interview that one of the ways she uses to ensure her children develop into independent individuals is to have her children (both between the ages of three and six) buy their own train tickets. She would give them a certain amount of money and have them figure out how to buy the ticket, how much it costs, and which platform to take.

She believes this encourages her children to be unafraid to ask for help and develop their independence.

She also mentioned that she tries to expose them to a wide variety of situations, enabling them to navigate through them, and try out new things and new experiences.

During conflict situations, she forces herself not to step in and solve it for them although they don’t rely on the parent’s intervention to solve their problems.

The responses of those who said ‘yes’ and how they were doing so are listed in Table 1.

WHY AGENCY IS CRUCIAL

What we refer to as ‘agency’ is a crucial element of a child’s development journey, and is something that starts from a very young age – from just a few months old.

Developing a sense of agency early in life is crucial for the development of well-rounded individuals. It contributes to one’s self-esteem, identity and well-being.

Having the opportunity to make choices as children, both through self-chosen tasks by themselves, as well as taking on responsibilities, allows children to view themselves as competent, confident, and capable individuals.

Cultivating the belief that we are in control of things – that we can influence events – is an important trait to be developed at a young age in all children. This proactive personality is directly linked to career success (Seibert, Kraimer and Crant, 2001).

Agency is also developed between the ages of one and three, according to Erikson’s developmental stage theory of autonomy vs shame. He explains: “The parents’ patience and encouragement helps foster autonomy in the child. Children at this age like to explore the world around them and they are constantly learning about their environment. If caregivers encourage self-sufficient behaviour, toddlers develop a sense of autonomy a sense of being able to handle many problems on their own. But if caregivers demand too much too soon, refuse to let children perform tasks of which they are capable, or ridicule early attempts at self-sufficiency, children may instead develop a sense of shame and doubt about their ability to handle problems.”

The Australian National Quality Standard Professional Learning Programme has identified that “key learning dispositions such as curiosity, creativity and imagination, and learning processes such as inquiry, experimentation, and investigation all presuppose a degree of child-independence”.

Research has also found that children with a higher level of secure attachment relationships with their mothers tend to bring a higher level of social initiative (Chen, 2012). On the other hand, children’s ambivalent attachment was positively related to shyness and social discomfort.

AGENCY IN DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS

When dealing with children between the ages of one and five years, these are some ways to help in the development of high agency:

- Supporting children to negotiate a resolution rather than solving it for them
- Providing opportunities for children to set goals for learning
- Providing opportunities for children to learn through co-researching with adults
- Offering choices of experiences based on what children are keen on learning
- Encouraging children to think about fairness within the service, local community and outside world
- Considering a more democratic system of decision-making. For example, children could explore voting on relevant issues
- Supporting children’s voices within the community and connecting

In conclusion, in our research thus far, we found that agency is a key driver in decision-making and a key leadership competence. This proactive behaviour also leads to the ability to initiate and drive change, as well as the capability to initiate and drive a specific vision across small communities (what we call ‘building communities of love’). Whilst it is great to see that many parents are already looking at developing this crucial quality in their children, it is imperative for all parents to cultivate it in their own children.

Happy parenting!

For school-going children, some of the ways to promote agency include:

- Promoting learning through leisure and play-based activities that children plan and are relevant to their interests and other learning
- Extending on peer support programmes and creating mentoring relationships
- Allowing children opportunities to assess and identify hazards as well as develop risk assessment strategies
- Supporting children to take on the responsibilities of an older sibling’s departure including developing procedures for handling their belongings and greeting educators

Nurturing Independence

In our research thus far, we found that agency is a key driver in decision-making and a key leadership competence. This proactive behaviour also leads to the ability to initiate and drive change, as well as the capability to initiate and drive a specific vision across small communities (what we call ‘building communities of love’).

whilst it is great to see that many parents are already looking at developing this crucial quality in their children, it is imperative for all parents to cultivate it in their own children. Happy parenting!

This is the fifth part of a series of articles based on the Leaderonomics’ 2018 Parenting Survey. Misread the previous article? Fret not! You can find it on pages 8-9 of our Sept 29 issue at bit.ly/IdrEMag. Be sure to keep a lookout for the subsequent articles in print.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps taken</th>
<th>% of times cited</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doing chores</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take up responsibility</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own decision making / freedom of choice / independence / self-reliance</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completing / managing tasks on their own</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouraging them</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guiding them</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being there for them / giving love / spending time with them</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education / school</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trusting them</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They all grow to be independent / automatically / naturally</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow them to make mistakes</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide opportunities</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork / group activities</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow space / respect privacy</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guide and monitor, not hold-hand</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationships with others</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t give pocket money</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mind development</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage them to recognise their feelings and talk about it</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through teaching</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking initiative</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance of not using limiting words</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopt a reward and consequence system</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help to compare and control their preferences</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant motivation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning through overcoming their failures and setbacks</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leading by example</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow socialising space</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Managing Fear in Business

By ANDREW GRIFFITHS
editor@leaderonomics.com

If we are honest with ourselves, fear is the constant companion of many small business owners, particularly for solos.

It’s natural when you think about it. You are responsible for paying the bills and making enough money to support yourself. What will happen if you lose a big valuable client? What if you get sick? What if a competitor comes into your market and steals all of your customers? Fear, fear, fear.

It’s really easy to let our minds run rampant and live a life filled with fear. Of course, the problem is that this is a terrible way to live. It is exhausting, it invites doom and disaster.

I strongly believe that our customers can smell fear, and it erodes the sense of confidence that they may have in us and our products and services.

How do we stop this beast from controlling us? I have found that if we adopt and learn from these five strategies, we will slowly start to build our confidence.

And over many years, I’ve realised that in business, the more confident we are, the more likely we are to succeed.

Here are five strategies to manage fear that I’ve used in my business and in my life:

1. Understand that the longer you do what you do, the better you get at it and the more confident you become.

Try this: Once a week, take a few minutes to grab a pen and a nice notebook, and write down everything you’ve learned this week.

At the same time, write down how you’re better as a person this week than you were last week.

Keep track of all of these improvements, lessons, learnings etc. and I guarantee your confidence will grow and your fears will start to dissolve.

2. Have really good regular debriefing sessions with your clients.

Ask them to tell you what’s working for them and what’s not.

Learning from these discussions, and not getting threatened or leaping into a defensive mood when they want certain things to improve or change, makes us better in every way.

When we have strong and mature relationships with our clients, we tend to be far more confident in the relationship lasting and growing. This has to be good for business.

3. Deal with facts, not fiction.

Most of the things we worry about will never happen, yet we still worry about them, which when you think about it, is kind of silly.

In every situation, with every fear, make sure you are dealing with the facts. Take the time to get them, don’t get emotional, don’t let your mind race ahead, collect the facts and then make informed, smart decisions.

4. Imagine that what you are worried about actually happens.

But think it all the way through. This fearful thing has happened, what now? What will you do? How will you recover?

Start to put a plan together for what you will do if this happens. Take the fear out of the fearful thing by being prepared to face it should the situation arise, and have better thoughts about what it might actually mean.

5. Talk about your fears and concerns with other business owners who have been there and done that.

Ask them to tell you what’s working for them and what’s not.

Whatever you are worried about or fearful of in business, I’ve been there too, along with anyone who has run their own business.

In Conclusion

We need to learn to master our fear. Use it as a motivator if that helps.

It has certainly helped me to get things done in the past, and it’s not sustainable as a motivational tool.

I see so many business owners who are living every single day filled with fear about the future, that it breaks my heart.

At the same time, it gives you access to a peer group to help you if the worst case scenario should happen.

As you’re reading this, you might be rolling your eyes and thinking, “What would Andrew know about the challenges and issues that I have in my business?”

That’s okay, it’s a natural thought. Our fears are so powerful to us. But please rest assured that whatever you are worried about or fearful of in business, I’ve been there too, along with anyone who has run their own business.

Eric Lau explores what fear is and how to build the courage to overcome it so we can reach our full potential in the things we undertake.

Check out this podcast:
b.it.ly/Conquer-fear

LEADING FROM THE EDGE

By JAMIE ANDREW

Catch Jamie Andrew live, speaking about how he faces life’s tough challenges, despite losing his hands and feet in a climbing accident at the age of 29.

Jamie’s inspiring story will transform your life. Come and be inspired by Jamie during our public programme as he weaves his tale on how he pushes forward no matter how tough the journey by using a few key techniques!

Date: 4th Nov 2018
Time: 2 PM - 6 PM
Venue: HELP International School
Fee: RM200

Scan to book your seats today!

bit.ly/jamieandrew

www.leaderonomics.com | Saturday 27 October 2018
BUILDING a strong culture that aligns with the mission and vision of the company will not only build company-wide alignment, a shared sense of purpose, and culture-driven strategies that get the desired results; you will also see a measurable improvement in productivity and performance.

An organisational culture is an ingrafted set of values and beliefs that determine how individuals within that culture behave, react, conduct business, communicate and treat others. A culture is a structure in which the employees and leaders use as a guide on how to manage their teams, recruit top talent, and work, treat or communicate with clients.

You can see how an undefined, unmanaged and unmutualised culture can lead to chaos, mixed messages, poor hires, and unclear direction and expectations – all of which affect employee retention, client retention and the bottom line.

So, how does company culture impact revenue?

**STRONG CULTURES BREED ENGAGEMENT**

A strong, well-defined positive culture increases employee engagement, job satisfaction, and well-being. A Business-2-Community (B2C) report stated that companies with engaged employees outperform those without by 202 per cent.

Engaged employees are the difference between a great hire who is enthusiastic about their role, determined to make a positive impact; and a mediocre hire who simply gets their work done, clocks-in and clocks-out without much thought about how they can do more, be better, or help others around them excel.

Culture plays a critical role in overall business performance. By improving engagement, even a 5-point increase is linked to a 3 percent bump in revenue according to the 2018 Global Employee Engagement Trends Report from Aon.

Most companies fall short at four things: (1) clearly defining their culture, (2) managing that culture, (3) aligning culture with strategy and desired results, and (4) leveraging culture during times of change.

Strong cultures with high-performing teams have common characteristics. They make a conscious decision to build and define a culture that attracts and retains the right team members, promotes the organisation’s values, and reinforces those values throughout the company with consistent action. Culture matches strategy and strategic objectives.

Strong cultures breed engagement because the employees share a common purpose and understand how their role impacts the company. They are rewarded for their efforts which strengthens the messages that reinforce the key mindsets and behaviours needed to deliver the desired results.

Feeling fulfilled, appreciated, and being a part of something bigger than oneself has a way of permeating throughout a business, elevating the level of work and outcomes possible. Everyone feels connected and trust begins to build because everyone’s words match actions and mindsets match behaviours.

**STRONG CULTURES HAVE A HIGH DEGREE OF TRUST**

The two factors that trust affects most are productivity and engagement. Building a culture of trust isn’t just a nice thing to have, it is a critical component to company growth and longevity.

Trust and loyalty are not a bottom-up strategy, but rather a social norm that must be established at the top. Authentic trust is built through consistent actions, follow-through, and a genuine interest and care for the employees.

Employee retention and engagement increases when there is a high degree of trust. A Gallup research reports a staggering 87 per cent of employees worldwide are not engaged. Can we assume that leaders and managers are not prioritising trust in their organisations?

**RETHINKING COMPANY CULTURE**

THAT’S ONE WAY TO IMPROVE BUSINESS PERFORMANCE

**CEO Conference 2018**

**Embracing Digital to Power Growth**

The rise of digitalisation has opened doors for exponential growth through the power of learning and technology. Aimed to equip forward-thinking SME leaders to take on a future of endless possibilities, this conference will give you the keys to:

- **Leveraging data for strategic business growth** • **Using A.I. to revitalise your business**
- **Understanding the impact of culture in leveraging technology** • **And more!**

Also featuring the world-renowned immersive experience **insideRISK** Level up your leadership and decision-making capabilities as you are faced with real-life hostage negotiations that were kept secret for over 25 years!

Be part of the experience. Register today.
Connecting with Your Potential Client

The salesperson’s first essential task is to connect with the potential client in a way that promotes honest and open sharing of information. The first three story-types make a connection of liking, authority, and trust.

**Personal Story**

This story explains who you are and why you do what you do. It shows your potential client that you can be trusted and that you are an authority. It’s not a bragging story, rather it should show vulnerability and humility.

Your personal story should finish with, “Enough about me, what about you? How did you get to do what you do?” It is the exchange of stories that leads to rapport and a fruitful business relationship.

**Key Staff Story**

Salespeople can prime their future clients to like and trust other people in their company if they’re able to tell their stories. The key staff story raises the credibility of your company and solves a common problem for salespeople, which is getting too deeply involved in post-sales activities.

By priming your customer to like and trust the experts that will perform and deliver your service, the salesperson can get back to their primary role—selling the next deal.

**Your Company’s Story**

Most businesses make exactly the same claims and assertions about their products and services as their competitors. But your company’s story is unique!

How did your company succeed and avoid failure? That’s an interesting story. When your salespeople can tell your company’s story, they position you as interesting, special, and memorable.

**Differentiate Your Company**

The next task is to persuade your client to change.

To do that, you must offer compelling insights, differentiate your company, and make it safe for them to buy from you. Two stories achieve this task: insight and success stories.

**Insight Stories**

Insight is knowledge you have about your customer’s market and business that they do not appreciate but should! It’s neither wise nor practical for your 26-year-old salesperson to challenge your customers with this knowledge. But if they tell the story of how your company discovered those insights, your future clients will listen with interest and absorb the information.

**Success Stories**

If you’ve been in business for a while, you must have customers with whom you have succeeded with your offering.

But salespeople often fail to tell that story from the perspective of your successful customer. A well-delivered success story lets your future clients vicariously experience your products and services before they purchase. It’s a way for them to mentally trial your business, risk free!

**Closing the Deal**

Even with a good connection and a differentiated offer, it can be tough to get the contract signature.

Buying teams consist themselves with risk in the decision phase. The final two stories are designed to help mitigate risks and close the deal.

**Values Stories**

When a decision committee is thinking about a major purchase, they’re concerned about risk. How will your company behave after the deal is signed? Is your company an ethical company to do business with?

What kind of staff do you employ? The central character in the values story is a leader in your company, who demonstrates by their actions how your company will behave after the sale.

**In Conclusion**

Most salespeople need help to prepare and deliver these stories, but the majority improve rapidly with story coaching.

And they don’t forget the storytelling skill because humans love and remember good stories!

Mike Adams is a business storytelling specialist and author of Seven Stories Every Salesperson Must Tell. Mike has managed sales teams in the UK, Russia, and throughout Asia for international corporations. Since 2014, Mike’s storytelling consultancy practice has been helping sales teams find and tell their best stories. To connect with Mike email us at editor@leaderonomics.com

---

**By MIKE ADAMS**

**editor@leaderonomics.com**

---

**Online Exclusive**

We are creatures of habit. There is comfort in getting things done in a way that we’re familiar and comfortable with, but what if these habits lead to unwarranted stress in the office?

To learn ways to increase your productivity, read: bit.ly/SMPProductivityTips

---

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!
There are five essential skills for effective leadership and four reasons leaders lose their way. Check it out here: bit.ly/SCleadership-skills

**1. PracTise self-DiscipliNe**

All great leaders have strong values and integrity; they stick to their convictions.

As a leader, you’re a role model for those around you, and you need to show them you are consistent in your values so that they respect you.

No leader can be truly great without respect. Manage yourself so that you’re always acting consistently; show that you’re worthy of respect.

**2. Be couragouS**

To be authentic takes courage – you can’t escape that fact.

**3. Build lasting relationsHips**

If you have terrible personal skills, work on them because relationships are everything if you want to be a great leader.

Learn how to identify different personality types, so you can tailor your approach to the individual and make your working relationship run smoothly.

When you treat your team as individuals and encourage openness between you and them, you’re building relationships that will last.

**IN CONCLUSION**

A great leader is always striving for professional and personal improvement; they are never complacent and by demonstrating such, they inspire those around them to improve as well.

**traitS of a gReat leader**

It takes an extremely brave person to admit their mistakes and wrongdoings, and to be able to face hard situations and make tough decisions.

Go outside your comfort zone, be brave, and you’ll be an authentic leader.

**TRANSFORm a life**

**TRANSFORm your community**

**TRANSFORm our nation**

At Leaderonomics, we believe that everyone matters, anyone can be empowered to be a leader. Our dream is to raise up individuals who would build communities of love that would transform the nation.

Leaderonomics 10th Anniversary Celebration & Youth Fundraising Dinner

Even as we reflect and celebrate the past 10 years, we look forward to reach more and give more… Join us on this journey for just as it takes a village to raise a child, it takes a community to build a leader. Purchase a table at our Fundraising dinner and let’s build our future together, for ourselves, our families and our beloved Malaysia.

Monday, 19th November, 6.30pm

JW Marriot Kuala Lumpur

In partnership with YTL Foundation

Register to purchase a table and sponsor at bit.ly/LDGRGala

All proceeds will benefit Leaderonomics’ Youth’s efforts to bring leadership development opportunities and inspiration to all parts of Malaysia.

For more info, contact Audrey at audrey.tong@leaderonomics.com