SPEARHEADING GROWTH THROUGH EFFICIENCY

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M ALAYSIA in the 1950s was a place where people sought stable and secure government sector jobs for life. Few people stayed from the norm.

Those who did so faced an uphill battle to achieve financial security, let alone make a name for themselves. Building your own career was a bold move, and one perceived as reckless.

But, as the saying goes, fortune favours the brave, and for one deeply respected leader in Malaysia, his courageous leap of faith would become one of Malaysia’s greatest success stories.

Tan Sri Azman Hashim is the executive chairman of AmCorp Group and chairman of several subsidiaries of the AmBank Group, and also AmCorp Properties. His career spans over half a century, and he has inspired generations of leaders throughout Southeast Asia, who have sought his wisdom and insights into the business world.

Ahead of the 2018 AmBank BizCONFERENCE and AmBank BizRACE, taking place in Penang from Nov 10, Azman sat down with host Roshan Thiran on a fascinating episode of The Leaderonomics Show to talk about his life as an entrepreneur and businessman.

Studying accountancy in Australia on a Colombo Plan Scholarship, he became a chartered accountant and chartered secretary before the age of 21.

On his return to Malaysia, and after a four-year stint at Bank Negara, he knew his heart lay in running his own business. But there was one problem…

He explained: “In those days, business people were seen as small people. I remember that the top Malay businessmen were just running petrol stations – that was big at that time. But they would say at the time that if you’re a businessman, you can’t get a job.

I wanted to work for a chartered accountancy firm initially, but the environment was such that I worked at Bank Negara – that was my first job. After four years, I felt that it’s not for me. ‘After my first year, I told the deputy governor I wanted to leave for a firm I worked for before (during the scholarship). The deputy governor called the boss there and said, ‘You want Azman? Over my dead body!’ That was it.”

Four years later, he went back to his boss, this time determined to start his own practice.

It was a pioneering attitude for the time – climbing the ladder in civil service was very much the thing to do. But Azman had made up his mind: he felt a passion to go beyond the norm, and was courageous to take a calculated risk.

“Everybody thought I was crazy,” he said. “The people thought I was crazy for leaving a good, stable government job. That was the mindset, and it was the most difficult decision for me to make.”

Azman revealed that he was fearless in his decision-making, even though his practice started out with just three people: himself, an office boy, and his wife who filled the role of secretary.

The accountancy practice soon acquired a staff of 100, but after a time, Maybank called for Azman’s services to help keep a sinking ship afloat.

He was invited to join the bank’s board to help turn around the bank’s fortunes, which meant that he had to leave his business before joining the bank as an executive – a role he filled for 10 years.

At that point, another foray into the corporate world beckoned, this time in the shape of a successful textile company that ran for 20 years.

In the 1980s, Azman was appointed chairman of the AmBank Group, a position he continues to hold today and in which he remains a highly-regarded example of effective leadership.

In recent decades, countless books and programmes on leadership have increased views of executives in the business world as to what it truly means to be a great leader.

For Azman, being a leader is less about your approach and skillset, and more about who you are as a person… and how others see you.

He added, “I didn’t learn anything in the books about leadership or management. To me, everybody’s a leader. If you’re leading a group of people or anything, you’re a leader. A leader is appointed by their peers – they must accept you as a leader.

“I think people accept me because they think I’m a nice fellow, I get along with people, I’m fair, I don’t have any secret agenda – some people promote themselves, right? People like that don’t last.

So, that’s why I’ve been the chairman of AmBank for over 30 years.”
I’ve always a pleasure to catch up with members of the Leaderonomics team, both past and present. Not only do I get to know how people are progressing, but I never fail to gain new insights into leadership and business.

Recently, I caught up with our former managing editor, Sandy Clarke, who shared his amusement on signing up at a new gym a few weeks ago. Before coming to Malaysia, Sandy was a journalist and broadcast in the United Kingdom (UK) with 20 years of experience under his belt.

Of course, when companies show off their public relations (PR) tricks, they often forget that their customers could be from any background that sees through the outdated tactics.

During our conversation, Sandy shared that he had been looking to join a new gym anyway and he knew this particular chain well.

Having seen the gym promotion at a local mall where the company is about to set up, he noticed that they were giving away a ‘special promotion price’ to the first 100 customers. That sounds good, right? Who wouldn’t want to be among the first batch to sign up, and for a discounted price?

GIMMICKS DON’T CUT IT ANYMORE

As Sandy put it: “I’d been in the mall a few times and noticed the promotion. Interestingly, they had ‘sold’ 291 promo memberships and had left to go – what a coincidence! Whether you’re in the UK, United States, or Asia, promos always seem to be close to their limit when you walk past.

Do you ever notice no company tells you to think it over, or take your time? I find these outdated hurry tactics quite funny... fewer people are falling for them nowadays.

I had every intention of signing to this company from the start. It’s closer to home and the gym’s hours are suitable to my schedule.

The guy went through his spiel, telling me that, if I signed up right away, he’d waive the joining and admin fee – both for which totalled more than RM300, not including the key and membership fee, another RM300.

The funny thing was, the other prospective customers around me already knew what I knew. Either the company is insane and really does charge close to RM700 post-promotion (in which case, good luck getting customers), or they’re chancing their arm with a cheap gimmick, which puts most people off.

Most of the people around me were interested initially, but all of them walked off. The guy was trying far too hard to get the numbers.

Businesses need to realise that not only do customers have many more options these days, but they’re also much savvier.

PR gimmicks belong to the 1990s, customers now are attracted to quality brands that are authentic and put the customer first. If business leaders focus on ‘What’s in it for the customer’, the bottom line will take care of itself. It’s mind-boggling that this kind of hurry tactic is still practised.

Of course, in Malaysia, we all love a discount. But be realistic. People can spot you a mile off when you’re being disingenuous, and I think it’s really sad when this kind of thing is done by brands that are solid to begin with and have a good reputation anyway. There’s no need for gimmicks. They turn more people off than they draw in.

BE AUTHENTIC

In leadership, we often talk about the importance of authenticity as though it applies only to individuals, but it is vital for organisations to develop authenticity, too.

As Sandy points out, people don’t need years of experience in media to know when they’re being played. The power lies with the customer these days, and what they now look for are brands that they can place their trust in.

We see the likes of Starbucks, Apple, and Nike who put the interests of the customer at the forefront of what they do. Don’t get me wrong, it’s not that they have a completely altruistic motive — all commercial business is fundamentally about the bottom line.

But effective brands realise that their bottom line flourishes when customers are happy; when they feel valued and heard, and that there’s an honest relationship between customer and company.

To illustrate the point, a friend of mine bought a pair of Nike running shoes last week at the company’s Mid Valley store. He said that, when he chose the pair he wanted, the assistant asked him questions about his health and his exercise regime.

When the assistant realised my friend had flat feet, he advised him to try out other shoes that were raised on the inside to help form a comfortable arc on the foot.

He was then invited to try the shoes out on the in-store treadmill, and the assistant made sure they were a comfortable fit for my friend before he left the shop.

When relating the story to me, my friend said, “I never really bothered with sticking to one brand before. Running shoes are running shoes, whether they come from Puma, Adidas or Nike. But from now on, I’ll be sticking to Nike. The staff could have just let me buy the shoes I originally intended to purchase, but instead they made sure I walked out with running shoes that were right for me. That’s true customer service.”

GENUINE CUSTOMER SERVICE

Perhaps proper customer service is something we’re still trying to develop here in Malaysia, but it begins with a simple-yet-effective principle: put the customer first and the rest will follow.

Most people can see through so-called ‘clever’ PR strategies and unless, like Sandy, they’re sold before the sales pitch (having done their research), organisations will lose out on much more than they win.

As Sandy said, “There’s still a focus on cheap psychology tricks to bring in the customers. Some of them can bring short-term value to an extent.

“In my opinion, the companies that truly, not just through their talk, put their customers’ interests at the heart of what they do, will be the ones who see brand loyalty come back to them by the truckload.

“Giving just a little with authenticity will yield much stronger results than appearing to give much away through gimmicks. Simple, genuine approaches often produce the most amazing results, both for individuals and companies alike.”

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By ROSHAN THIRAN
rosihan@leaderonomics.com

Consumers want to know they are making the right decision with each purchase, but deciding what’s ‘right’ isn’t just about facts and figures. People also make decisions based on feelings and instincts. Here’s how you can use stories to connect authentically with your customers. bit.ly/connecting-story

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 (@Rlepaker) for more insights into business, personal development and leadership.
The electrical and electronics (E&E) subsector is working towards overcoming challenges to achieve Industry 4.0. Read more about it here: bit.ly/HMCC-EandE

THE CHALLENGE WITH SMES

1. Lack of investment
   There is an urgent need for engineering industries in Malaysia to replace or upgrade their machinery and equipment to remain on par with more advanced economies. Unfortunately, this is an expensive undertaking and the majority of M&E companies do not have the financial resources to do so, says Machinery and Equipment (M&E) Productivity Nexus Champion for the Malaysia Productivity Corporation (MPC), Mac Ngan Boon. According to him, many are unwilling to make the investment because they cannot see a future for their company and the industry. “These companies are mostly owned by a single person and are very owner-driven,” Mac says.

   “Many do not even have a succession plan as their children are not interested in taking over the business, and because of that, they do not see the need to upscale. On top of that, the companies are mainly batch producers who cannot see continuity in their work. So, the push is just not there.”

2. Overdependence on cheap foreign labour
   Cost is a huge factor in business, and a common way for SMEs to cut costs is to rely on cheap foreign labour. Mac says that it has reached a point where SMEs are unable to continue production without them. “Foreign labour is easily available, so there is no push from them to rely on cheap foreign labour,” says N. Sangaran, who is the Machinery & Engineering Industries Federation (MEF) secretariat general.

   Mac says that while Malaysia’s labour cost may be a fraction of a developed country like Germany’s due to our reliance on cheap foreign labour, our productivity levels are also likely to be 10 times lower than theirs, per hour. “This is because industry players in Germany have already automated most of their processes, whereas a lot of the tasks in Malaysia are still manual. If their productivity is 10 times more than ours given the same number of man hours, our man hours are going to be less competitive against developed countries. It’s only a matter of time before we get left behind,” states Mac.

TECHNICAL AND MANAGEMENT SKILLS

The M&E industry is typically labour intensive and Malaysians generally dislike taking up such jobs, which they consider dirty, difficult and dangerous – also known as the 3Ds. However, Mac says that the goal is not just to train more Malaysians in the technical aspects, as that would put them in direct competition with the foreign labour. Instead, Malaysians need to be equipped with both technical and management skills so that they can truly understand the intricacies of the processes involved, and only then would they be fit to lead the others.

“When a person has reached that level of training and understanding, then we can look at automation, because he will not only know how to run the machines, but also understand how they work,” says Mac.

He adds that with the increase of automation in the industry, SMEs will require fewer workers to produce the same output, with better control and less defects. “That, to me, is what we should be thinking about.”

Upskilling the Malaysian M&E workforce in this way will increase their income, raise the industry’s productivity levels, and reduce the nation’s dependence on foreign labour.

Sadly, there is a growing gap between the industry’s demand for skilled technicians and the number of qualified Malaysian technical graduates who enter the workforce each year.

This is because more and more school-leavers are choosing to enrol in universities for better courses, making them engineers when they graduate, opposed to technical college courses which will make them technicians.

“There is a huge lack of talent at the blue-collar management level. We in the industry find it so difficult to find people at this level – all we’re getting now are engineers,” shares Mac. “But once a person has an engineering degree, his mindset is: ‘My job is in the office; I don’t want to be on the floor’.”

FINAL THOUGHTS

Mac notes that Malaysia is lagging in terms of development and that it is extremely worrying. “China has already entered Industry 4.0, while we are still stuck at Industry 2.5,” he says. “Innovation and specialisation are important, and this is something we have to think about as part of the bigger picture.”

Sangaran cites Germany and Switzerland as examples of countries that have adopted a broader outlook, with the global market in mind. “They are known as makers of high-precision machines. They make what the global market needs, not just what their market needs.”

“Malaysia, on the other hand, has developed the habit of making machines largely for our local market, which is why our export numbers, while good, could be very much better. This is where the mindset must change.

For Malaysia to remain competitive in the Southeast Asian region and become on par with developed nations, we will have to move towards being fully automated and digitised.

However, the current levels of productivity in the M&E industry must be increased drastically before we can even begin to consider embracing this new industrial revolution. This is where the industry and the government must work together to enable Malaysia to fully embrace Industry 4.0, before transitioning into Industry 4.0.

“Malaysians have become very complacent. If we are not going to think radically, none of this will work. We must change our mindset and strengthen our will for change, for the future of Malaysia,” Mac declares.
EXPERIENCING MALAYSIA

PARADIGM SHIFT IN TOURISM

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

TRAVELLING is a much-loved activity worldwide, and many intrepid travellers plan their itineraries to discover a place in advance just to prepare to explore a new country or have their adventure of a lifetime.

According to the Travel and Tourism Council, despite natural disasters, health pandemics, political instability and unpredictable shocks from terrorist attacks, travel and tourism continued to be resilient and robust for 2017. As long as governments continue to invest in essential infrastructure, the tourism subsector will remain strong.

Tourism has become a way to showcase Malaysia’s economic, cultural, social, environmental and heritage values and the subsector has evolved into a more important engine of economic growth.

GLOBAL TOURISM AT A GLANCE

Tourism is among the biggest and fastest growing sectors in the global economy, playing an important role in job creation, export revenue and domestic value added.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) states that tourism directly contributes an average of 4.2% of gross domestic product (GDP), 21% of service exports and 6.9% of employment in OECD countries.

In the OECD Tourism Trends and Policies 2018 report, the inclusion of 49 OECD and partner countries provided a global perspective. The report revealed that international tourist arrivals increased to more than 1.2 billion in 2016, with arrivals to OECD countries constituting just over half and matching the global growth rate of 3.9% (compared to 2015).

The tourism economy is developing fast. New challenges and opportunities are presented by major long-term trends, such as digitalisation, growing demand, changing demographics and climate change, to name a few.

TRAVEL IN MALAYSIA

The tourism subsector has been earmarked as one of the government’s focus areas, and an enabler for the transformation of Malaysia into a high-income nation.

In 2017, the Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board reported that there were 25.9 million international tourist arrivals.

In order to achieve tourist arrivals of 30 million by 2020, productivity is a vital factor that needs to be looked into.

“The trends have shifted. Decades ago, a large chunk of tourist arrivals in Malaysia came from Europe, but now, tourists from China are dominating arrivals,” reveals Uzaidi, who is also the president of the Malaysian Inbound Tourism Association (MITA) and Malaysia Tourism Council (MTC).

“The preferences of tourists have changed as well. It’s not enough to ‘sell’ KLCC, Genting (Highlands) and Langkawi anymore. Because now, people want to go for the ‘experience’. So now, we are going towards that angle. It’s no longer about physical infrastructure. Infrastructure has now been relegated to a supporting role,” he added.

“The tourism economy has become highly competitive. ‘Airbnb’ and other similar digital platforms are part of disruptive technology – is it a competitor or support system? We can’t stop them, so we have to change it. It may be an advantage for the industry, but it has to be on the same level playing field. The whole world, including governments are trying to cope and keep up,” says Uzaidi.

“A representative from Airbnb said that they were willing to do what the government wanted them to do, but please be specific. I’m willing to pay tax, but to whom? I’m willing to register, but with whom? They are big and they want to be legal here in Malaysia. So, they are willing to comply with regulations, terms and conditions.”

Not only tour agencies and the government should promote Malaysia, but even the average person can promote Malaysia through their social media, and show their friends overseas what they can see and experience here in Malaysia.

URT in Malaysia

In 2016, Malaysia’s MICE industry attracted 217,928 delegates to 135 events, generating RM1.05bil in revenue.

“However, while our neighboring countries such as Vietnam and Thailand are enjoying double digit growth in tourism arrivals, we are having a -3% growth in 2018. This could be due to many factors, which need to be determined,” says Uzaidi, the Champion of the Tourism Productivity Nexus.

The Tourism Productivity Nexus was established in November 2017 and serves as a strategic platform to strengthen the working partnership between the government, private sector and tourism industry players with a common understanding to build the national tourism industry.

Additionally, this partnership will look into generating more revenue for the country and increasing employment and business opportunities, with the ultimate objective of sustaining the productivity growth of Malaysia’s tourism industry as a whole.

MPC has been working to improve productivity in Malaysia for the past 25 years. Among its offerings include talks and workshops, training programmes, advisory and consultancy services on productivity improvement. It also awarded grants and recognitions to organisations which conducted research projects related to productivity.

MPC has also developed benchmarking and best practices, researching the best ways to improve competitiveness and innovation in the country. To accelerate productivity growth, it launched the Malaysia Productivity Blueprint (MPB) in 2017. Nine priority subsectors were established, one of which is Tourism.

CHANGING TRENDS

“The trends have shifted. Decades ago, a large chunk of tourist arrivals in Malaysia came from Europe, but now, tourists from China are dominating arrivals,” reveals Uzaidi, who is also the president of the Malaysian Inbound Tourism Association (MITA) and Malaysia Tourism Council (MTC).

“We have homestays in Kuala Kurau, where locals would not think of build-ing homestays. But that is the authentic ‘kampung’ complete with traditional paddy fields. But we must make sure we have good facilities in place.”

“People didn’t think that Seremban could become a tourist destination. We are positioning Seremban as a cultural destination. And it’s very near to KLA (Kuala Lumpur International Airport), and we can encourage the transit pas-sengers to join a short tour. They can go to Seremban for some food experience and a cultural show. And maybe, they will come back.”

“The momentum and the interest had to be sustained. Therefore, a programme that attracts visitors and gets them to return many times over, was required.”

GOING STATE BY STATE

The Tourism Nexus is now in the midst of conducting a series of roadshows in every state. The roadshow consists of two parts – showcasing new tourism products and organising a forum, which serves as a platform for industries to discuss their issues and challenges, and highlight best practices.

“To showcase new products, we bring the industry players to a location, where we gather them to have business net-working or matching sessions. For exam-ple, if they go to Seremban or (anywhere in) Negeri Sembilan, they might find out there’s a new yacht, ostrich farm, etc,” says Uzaidi.

“Through the forum, we want to find out the vision of the local players, authorities, and the states. Then, we can assist them from the industry point of view. What is the perception among the industry players? What are the challenges for us to promote the new place?”

According to Uzaidi, upcoming road-shows this year are set for Sabah and Sarawak.

REMAINING COMPETITIVE

For Visit Malaysia Year 2020, the government has set the target of 30mil tourist arrivals and an estimated RM10bil in earnings.

Tourism and the preference of tourists have evolved over the decades to include a variety of tastes and styles. This industry has also become highly competitive.

“Airbnb and other similar digital platforms are part of disruptive technology – is it a competitor or support system? We can’t stop them, so we have to change it. It may be an advantage for the industry, but it has to be on the same level playing field. The whole world, including governments are trying to cope and keep up,” says Uzaidi.

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To enhance national productivity and increase our competitiveness, as well as remain current, we need to take concrete measures to drive productivity for our nation. Read our last issue on productivity at: bit.ly/RetailAndFoodBd

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ENSURING FOOD SECURITY

CHALLENGES AND FUTURE POTENTIAL IN AGRO-FOOD

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igorous efforts need to be made, food, now, is a supermarket or grocery shop to buy reasonable prices for food. You can also walk into redefined and order a meal. However, some people in the world do not have luxury. There might be a production or supply problems in this region or area that prevents the adequate supply of good quality food to them.

To ensure food security and productivity of the agro-food sector, it is important to value the productivity and competitiveness, as we need to focus on increasing the food productivity for our nation.

Productivity can only result from better utilisation of existing resources, which are land, people and technology, but it has to be commercially viable.

AGRO-FOOD WORLDWIDE

Agriculture is one of the most important industries in the world, providing food for about 90% of the world’s population. The agricultural sector is of great importance as it provides food, fuel, feed, and fiber for people all over the world.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), agriculture accounts for about 11% of global GDP and provides employment for about one-third of the world’s labor force. In addition, agriculture is a major source of income for many people in developing countries.

The FAO estimates that about 800 million people worldwide suffer from hunger and malnutrition. To eliminate hunger, it is important to increase food production and productivity in the agricultural sector.

In order to achieve this, governments, farmers, and other stakeholders need to work together to increase food production and productivity. This can be done through various strategies such as investing in agricultural research and development, providing access to land, water, and credit, and improving irrigation and pest management practices.

The FAO notes that there are various challenges facing the agricultural sector, such as climate change, water scarcity, and pest and disease infestations. To address these challenges, it is important to invest in research and development to improve crop varieties and develop new technologies.

In conclusion, the agricultural sector is of great importance as it provides food, fuel, feed, and fiber for people all over the world. To ensure food security and productivity, it is important to increase food production and productivity in the agricultural sector.

Nowadays, people want traceability. If agriculture were more transparent, people would be able to follow the back to source of an issue.

Several programmes are being implemented under the National Agri-Food Policy (NAP) to upgrade the agro-food sector’s performance. The measures taken would enable the agro-food industry to thrive through optimized and sustainable land development, upgrading agro-food infrastructure, as well as increasing the quality of produce in compliance to standards.

CHALLENGES AGRO-FOOD SUBSECTOR

“Food is our most important commodity that we are agriculture country but that is not what people see us as,” said Dato’ Raja Ahmad, the Agro-Food Productivity and Innovation Commission (MAPIC) chairman.

“We have lots of rain, good soil, and lots of sunshine to transport and geographical location, we should have a lot of agro-food and agro-food but not a lot. We’re not doing it, because we are not a lot of technical expertise tend to be invested in those areas.”

In order to entice productivity in Malaysia for the agro-food sector, the government, through the MAPIC, had training programmes, provided technical assistance and support, and also awarded grants and exemptions to organisations which conducted research projects related to productivity.

In the 2000, MAPIC developed benchmarking and best practices showing how to enhance efficiency and competitiveness, increasing the economic benefits of agro-food productivity, and economic benefits of agro-food productivity but growth of yields has slowed down due to the problem of food losses and waste in agriculture, and inefficient practices which need to reduce the need to increase productivity.

In the 2017, MAPIC has registered 100% of the population aged 65 and over as senior citizens in Malaysia. The program is expected to increase the productivity of the agro-food sector by 20% compared to 2015.

If we need to find food, you go to a supermarket or grocery shop to buy it. If the food is not good, you can also walk into a restaurant or order a meal. However, some people in the world do not have luxury. There might be a production or supply problem in this region or area that prevents the adequate supply of good quality food to them.

That is why the smooth functioning of the agro-food sector is important.

AGRO-FOOD IN MALAYSIA

The agro-food sector in Malaysia is divided into two groups – agro-food and plantation industry. The agro-food industry includes agricultural activities such as crop cultivation, livestock and aquaculture.

In 2011, the income of the agro-food industry was RM25 billion. The industry is expected to reach RM30 billion by 2020, and 25% of the employment level in Malaysia.

The agro-food industry includes production, processing and logistics. It includes various types of activities such as crop cultivation, livestock and aquaculture. It can also be divided into two categories: agro-food and plantation industry.

“Nevertheless, people want traceability. If agriculture were more transparent, people would be able to trace back to source of an issue,” said Dato’ Raja Ahmad, the Agro-Food Productivity and Innovation Commission (MAPIC) chairman.

The agro-food sector has a huge potential for agriculture and agro-processing industries. It has great potential for agriculture and agro-processing industries. It has a huge potential for agriculture and agro-processing industries.

The agro-food sector is overloaded with redundant and obsolete production plants. However, this potential has to be utilized.

The labour productivity of the agro-food sector has increased by 6.1% to RM175 billion in 2017, from RM165 billion in 2016.

The agro-food sector is an important component of the Malaysian economy. It contributes significantly to the country’s GDP and employment. The sector is expected to continue to grow in the future, driven by rising demand for food and fibre, as well as investment in agricultural research and development.

In conclusion, the agro-food sector is an important component of the Malaysian economy. It contributes significantly to the country’s GDP and employment. The sector is expected to continue to grow in the future, driven by rising demand for food and fibre, as well as investment in agricultural research and development.
FISH OUT OF WATER

HOW ONE GUY LEARNT TO ADAPT TO SUDDEN CHANGES

By ETHAN GANES
editor@leaderonomics.com

ADAPTING to sudden change has never been my strongest suit. It is high on my list of get-pees, when plans get thrown out the window, or worse – when there aren’t any. By nature, I have always been someone who needed to have a game plan in mind. Unfortunately, sometimes plans fail – leaving me floundering about like a fish out of water. A few years ago, I got involved with Leaderonomics’ Youth Leadership camps and programmes as a facilitator. Through the activities that are carried out, the main objective is to have exponential, meaningful meaning we teach through hands-on exposure. Unfortunately, for me, this means very little room for control and things can change very, very fast. Here’s my story about how this fish out of water had to grow lungs.

COMING TO CAMP

As a facilitator, one of the things I had to do was design games and activities. I had to come up with interactive sessions and group work that instilled values like leadership with integrity or clear communication. It was my cup of tea.

What was definitely not my cup of tea was when:

a) My ideas for 20 people suddenly had to work for 40 people.

b) The campers misinterpreted the instructions.

c) The materials for the games magically disappeared.

Of course, these are just some of the examples that led to the feeling of impending hair loss. Thankfully, I had friends and mentors who taught me how get flexible – to ‘grow lungs’ when thrown out of water.

KEEPING THE ‘WHY’ IN MIND

There’s one question that never fails to amuse me: “Why did the chicken cross the road?” Of course, everybody knows the answer: “To get to the other side!” The thing that amuses me is that this chicken had a sense of purpose: it knew the ‘why’.

When coming up with a plan, the clearest part needs to be the aim. Everything else is subject to change. The first activity I conducted was an ice breaker that involved lots of movement and running! Of course, these are just some of the things that amused me is that this had a sense of purpose: it knew the ‘why’.

When coming up with a plan, the clearest part needs to be the aim. Everything else is subject to change. The first activity I conducted was an ice breaker that involved lots of movement and running! At least, it was supposed to. Sadly, it was the first day of camp and nobody wanted to move around.

I turned to my (clearly more experienced) friend and scream-whispered “WHAT DO I DO!” She said, “Remember, the idea is to get them to know each other. Try something else.”

Putting panic aside, I scrambled to find a new plan for the same goal. Despite my initial idea being tossed, I discovered that I did know other ways to break the ice! I split the large group into pairs and we played ‘two truths and a lie’. When things don’t go as hoped, it’s not uncommon for the mind to go blank, but knowing the ‘why’ of your plan helps get your brain juices flowing and you’ll come up with new ideas.

WHAT ARE YOUR THREE SIMPLE RULES?

When writing instructions, many of us tend to have a very clear picture in our minds. Herein lies the problem, things are clear – in our minds. George Bernard Shaw once said, “The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.” There’s simply no guarantee that the message we give is the one that is received.

During camp, we often have elaborate station games. These are activities where there are different booths, each with its own challenge. As the person in charge of conveying the rules and regulations, I want to tell you that, when things go wrong, we need to know about their stations. Have you ever been told everything you need to do at one go, you can guess that it didn’t end very well for me.

After my briefing, the games began and I visited each station. To my great horror, half the stations were following different game formats. The games carried on well, but the structure was all gone. The next station games session I ran, I took the advice of a friend. I gave my briefing, but this time, I added three simple rules to each game.

As long as these rules were followed, any change was welcome! For example:

1. Everybody must take part.
2. Nobody is allowed to...
3. The goal they must achieve is...

This time, my station visits looked a lot more like what I had in mind! Each game achieved its goal and maintained most of its format despite sudden changes here and there.

SURPRISES ARE MEANT TO BE SURPRISING

Perhaps the most crucial thing about dealing with a plan gone awry is acceptance. A surprise can be defined as ‘an unexpected or astonishing event’. Surprises happen, and the best we can really do is expect that there will be something unexpected. With this fact in mind, the first thing to do when facing an unexpected interference is to calm down. Our natural biological response to being caught off guard is to breathe faster, to sweat, and to release stress hormones – not exactly an ideal state for problem-solving. When things hit the fan, never underestimate the power of taking a deep breath or two.

Calmly step aside from the old plan and ask yourself, “What’s my ‘why’?” and “What are my Three Simple Rules?” Then – and only then – figure out the new plan.

LIVING WITH GILLS AND LUNGS

If I were a fish, my gills are my comfort zone. It’s the way I breathe easy. However, after years of running and coordinating activities, I’ve learnt that there are times when strategy will face tragedy. Swimming comfortably within the safety net of our plans is great! But sometimes, when a fish is thrown out of water, it will need to adapt and grow lungs.
TURNING LEARNING INTO A STRATEGIC WEAPON

BRINGING CONTENT TO LEARNERS AT THE RIGHT TIME OF NEED

By SASHE KANAPATHI
sashe.kanapathi@leaderonomics.com

In this day and age, we are in a constant flux of change. Therefore, there is a necessity to move learning from the moment of availability to the moment of need.

To clarify, ‘moment of availability’ is what I termed the practice of scheduling most appropriate form.

Catering to the model introduced by Mosher and Gottfredson, which are as follows:

1. NEW: learning something new for the first time
2. MORE: expansion of breadth or depth in a topic that they have just learnt about
3. APPLY: action upon what they have learnt by remembering and applying it to a situation they are in
4. SOLVE: using new knowledge and skills to actually solve a real-life problem that you are facing
5. CHANGE: being convinced of the need for the new learnings that may require a change in behaviour

Each of these needs differ in what the learner may be looking for.

For great content to be absorbed by the learner and then successfully applied, we need to think through the many ways in which this content needs to be delivered at the time of learner need, in the most appropriate form.

For example, you may teach creativitiy to address the 'new' need, but teach design thinking for the 'more' need. You may have design sprints for those in the 'apply' need.

That’s the future and something that we are trying to invest in.

The methodology should start with business goals and translate down to a people strategy, which is then translated down to a learning strategy.

Once you have this learning strategy, you should then create learning interventions that are consistent.

Therefore, does your learning calendar directly support your people strategy, which in turn directly supports your business outcomes?

Are you creating the right learning interventions at the right time for the right level? If you want your organisation to be more innovative, it doesn’t mean you have to send everyone for Innovative Thinking courses.

People are not going to become innovative by attending trainings like that. It’s important to understand that it needs to be built up by levels.

For example, you may teach creativity to address the 'new' need, but teach design thinking for the 'more' need. You may have design sprints for those at the right level.

Do your executives need to have the same level of ‘innovative’ competency as the senior managers? Perhaps they need to have training on just being more curious? This is what I mean by a point of view.

TYING IT TOGETHER

Learning is a powerful tool, but it shouldn’t be applied in a one size fits all manner.

We are now investing in a digital journey that will bring intentional learning to learners at the right time of need. Imagine being given the right nugget of content exactly as you are doing the work that requires it.

This is the next frontier of turning learning into a strategic weapon, and I’m looking forward to working on that being a reality.

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ARE EMAILS KEEPING YOU AWAKE?

By ANDREW GRIFFITHS
editor@leaderonomics.com

HEN was the last time you took a break from your business? Now, I mean a real break, not just an hour here or an hour there! The kind of break where you don’t think about your business, check your email (at any time), check your social media, or add a pile of things to your to-do list?

I’m a self-confessed workaholic. I’ve been rehabilitating off and on for many, many years and I’ve realised that for me, this is simply an everyday battle. Just like an alcoholic, it’s not something that a weekend in Tahiti will fix; it’s something that I have to work at every day. And from my experience, I’m not alone.

Many of the business owners that I have worked with over the years (and many of those I currently work with) have a major issue with managing their lives among a ridiculous schedule and growing workload.

YOU’RE OVERWORKING YOUR BRAIN

So, I’ve just had four days off. I haven’t done a single bit of work, I’ve been both crazy busy doing fun stuff and laying in bed doing nothing for half the day.

I’ve slept, I’ve eaten, I’ve walked miles, and I feel fantastic. My body feels great, but the biggest difference is how my brain feels. The fog is gone, the confusion is gone, the mental exhaustion is gone – and, I can hear my brain thanking me for the break.

Work on having a better life and lifestyle every single day, not once every few months or once a year.

The reality of my world is like most business people: hundreds of emails every day, piles of social media messages to manage, SKypes, phone calls, work to do, follow up to be done, projects to manage, and of course, a life to try and squeeze in.

It’s really hard to stay on top of this, hence why we burn ourselves out and, I can hear my brain thanking me for the break.

The power of a true break

Like many things, it’s hard to just incorporate a new activity into our day that will cure all of our ills. Often, we need to take some kind of massive action, like go to a health farm for a week or have a holiday without taking our phone (I look for places with no telephone reception).

For me, my four-day break came as the result of a friend ‘kidnapping’ me and setting a schedule that had no room for work, no room for Internet time, no room for social media, no room for anything other than play, relax, exercise, sleep, eat, and recharge – for four glorious days.

The difference is extraordinary, and I’m left with the overwhelming need to do this far more often.

But the other reality that I know is that come tomorrow, the world will encroach onto your inbox weekly!

THE DIFFERENCE

Each of us, and I hope you are one of these people, needs to work on this every single day. I have to work on this every single day. I have to work on it every single day.

IN CONCLUSION

For me, it’s simple. I’ve realised that I have to work on this every single day. I need to really rethink my priorities and what is actually important to me.

And I have to make sure I have people in my life who will help me live this life because I’m not that good at doing it on my own.

So, from now on, there will be no more checking emails in the middle of the night. One more step in the right direction.
Seeing with Your Mind’s Eye

By TERRY SMALL
editor@leaderonomics.com

YOU don’t perceive a reality as it really is. You perceive a reality as it is constructed by your own mind.

Henri-Louis Bergson stated, “The eye sees only what the mind is prepared to comprehend.” He was right.

Your brain thinks in pictures, not words. Close your eyes for a moment and think of a tomato. Notice that you saw a picture of a tomato. It was probably red.

You didn’t see the letters “t-o-m-a-t-o” floating in space. This picture was created in the occipital lobe of your brain. Metaphorically, we call this the mind’s eye.

These pictures in your mind’s eye are a big deal. Scientists, for years, have speculated that the act of seeing things in your mind’s eye uses the same brain circuits that you use when seeing things with your physical eyes. Brains scans now show this to be true.

The mind’s eye really does exist, and it shapes your version of reality.

Your brain engages with your environment by connecting incoming stimuli with what is already stored in your brain. Most likely the dominant picture.

You check your Facebook pictures, the family album... when was the last time you mindfully checked the pictures in your brain?

It is difficult to overstate the importance of this.

Napoleon Hill once said, “You become what you think about.”

Your brain thinks in pictures, not words. Close your eyes for a moment and think of a tomato. Put the exact pictures you want in your brain.

Your brain is a thought-producing machine. Thoughts are real forces. Thoughts produce pictures in your brain. These pictures are more powerful than you can imagine.

Put the exact pictures you want in your brain. Once or twice won’t do it. Put them there over and over again.

Then watch things change.

Terry Small is a brain expert who resides in Canada and believes that anyone can learn how to learn easier, better, and faster; and that learning in the mind is the most important skill a person can acquire.

In this series of Raise Your Game and The Science of Building Leaders, Leaderonomics CEO Roshan Thiran and Professor George Kohlrieser of IMD Switzerland talk about leading from the mind’s eye. Check it out: bit.ly/mind-eye

Everyone has a personal brand whether they know it or not. However, for leaders, it becomes exceptionally more important to have a personal brand that people will ‘buy’ into.

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!
By PETER SHIELDS  
editor@leaderonomics.com

EUROSCIENTIST, Daniel G. Amen claims that each individual has 70,000 thoughts per day, and more than 80 per cent of those are triggered by fear. Fear drives many of our behaviours, including the natural tendency to see others as the problem and judge them for their shortcomings – a habit that exists in every workplace. 

Despite being completely normal, this habit of judging others for their perceived weaknesses can be a barrier to effective leadership. According to University of Chicago psychology researcher, Justin F. Landy, these judgements are made based on three key personality aspects: morality, sociability and competence. 

Such judgements made in private might seem harmless, but this natural human dynamic presents a real problem for business leaders who are unaware of it. For those who are, it is an opportunity. Great leadership begins with managing the weaknesses of others and leveraging their strengths. 

LEADERSHIP BEGINS IN THE BRAIN

In his book, The Triune Brain in Evolution, American neuroscientist, Paul MacLean suggests that humans have a reptilian brain that is fear-driven and triggers the ‘fight, flight or freeze’ automatic response system. Above that sits the mammalian mind, which engages the emotions and needs for communal connection. At a higher level again, is the neocortex which governs the ability to think, reflect, and strategise. The neocortex is where leadership begins. 

Many contemporary neuroscientists have now moved beyond MacLean’s triune brain theory, believing it to be overly simplistic, but it remains a useful model for laypeople to understand the workings of the human mind. 

JUDGING OTHERS REVEALS MORE ABOUT YOURSELF

It is also possible that judgements of others are just an outward expression of one’s own self-judgements. Twentieth century psychotherapist, Carl Jung, believed that as the ego formed through the tumult of childhood, it learned to accept or to disown parts of itself. 

Usually, people accept the good things and disown the bad by pushing them into what Jung named, ‘the ego shadow’ of their psyche: “Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding of ourselves,” says Jung. 

Put simply, others are not always the problem. Leaders who find themselves judging others for what they see as undesirable personality traits would be wise to examine themselves as well. A 2010 study by Wake Forest University researcher, Dustin Wood, corroborated Jung’s theory. 

Wood claimed that each person’s perceptions of others revealed plenty about their own personality and a large number of negative personality traits were associated with viewing others negatively. 

LOOK AT YOUR OWN SHORTCOMINGS FIRST

Seeing others as the problem can seriously limit a leader’s effectiveness. Problem-centric leaders disempower others, they cause caution and dependency, they limit idea generation, and they stifle fun and effectiveness. 

Good people leave the team and those that remain learn how to avoid scrutiny and accountability by agreeing with the leader on every subject. They agree and do just enough to placate the fears and problem-centric style of their boss. The team becomes a projection of the leader’s fears, worries, and judgements. 

If a leader is in charge of a ‘below par performing team’ and he or she can see all of the team’s flaws, chances are, the team is mirroring back the leader’s inner qualities – the leader’s ego-shadow. 

People in the team are judging the leader too and they are thinking about the leader’s morality, sociability, and competence. 

Through understanding more about their own psychological make-up and emotional habits, leaders can build trust, increase dialogue, foster collective intelligence, increase the fun, and strengthen business relationships – ultimately leading to better business outcomes.