



Leaderonomics

The Science of Building Leaders



Focusing on what matters

Developing your identity through self-awareness

Editor's Note

THIS month, we delve into the topic of self-awareness in leadership and developing a vision for your organisation. It's no easy feat to get to know one's self, and self-awareness remains a challenge to most leaders, even if it's an overstated concept of leadership.

Self-awareness and vision is part of the Leaderonomics *Science of Building Leaders* framework, which covers various elements such as searching for identity; identity formation; developing clear goals, aspirations, a sense of purpose, a vision and sense of what leadership is for self, and a clear leadership point of view. Read more about the framework on page 16.

Evelyn Teh talks about the components of healthy self-awareness and key techniques to develop it. Read about the outcomes of self-aware leadership and the barriers to look out for when trying to develop a better sense of yourself.

Carolyne Njogu writes about the art of self-awareness and how it relates to a leader's vision, Rob Wyse shares why a visionary leader can be risky for the organisation and the three pillars of incredible leadership, while Joseph Tan tells us why the future is worth visioning and how to drive the results needed to sustain your business.

Read the key takeaways from the book

Leading Apple with Steve Jobs, written by Koh Earn Soo and his team. On *The Leaderonomics Show*, R Gopalakrishnan talks about the three worlds of a manager and how success depends on maintaining a balance between them.

All this and more in this issue! We hope the articles in this issue will help you reflect on both your personal and professional journey, and that the insights gained will give you a better understanding of yourself and what this means for those whom you lead.

Write to us at editor@leaderonomics.com if you have any thoughts you would like to share regarding this topic – we would love to hear from you.

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By ROSHAN THIRAN

roshan.thiran@leaderonomics.com

"Don't think about making art, just get it done. Let everyone else decide if it's good or bad, whether they love it or hate it. While they are deciding, make even more art." – Andy Warhol

HE was an artist who was described as 'impersonal' and even 'vacuous', and yet Andy Warhol revolutionised the culture of modern art and was also an astute businessman and self-promoter.

Warhol (1928-1987) is perhaps most famous for his Campbell Soup can paintings, alongside works depicting Coca-Cola bottles and other everyday objects. Many people will also be aware of his screen print series of the film icon Marilyn Monroe and former United States President Richard Nixon.

The revolutionary artist produced such series as a means of conveying the American obsession with consumerism, which often reduced even celebrity icons to symbols of mundane emptiness.

To Warhol, while we know the images, we rarely look beyond the surface of them to understand whatever it is that holds our attention for a time.

Paradoxically, although Warhol sought to create a persona that came across as detached from his work and the world around him, he was perhaps one of the most switched-on observers of what makes and sustains a brand.

As part of his awareness, he constantly made sure he stood out from the crowd, and even in interviews, he often kept people guessing what exactly he was thinking. This made him even more irresistible as his legend grew.

The avant-garde artist made his artistic home at The Factory in New York, where socialite gatherings took place almost as much as the creation of art works and experimental processes.

Among the countless stars who flocked to Warhol's legendary studio were model and actress Edie Sedgwick, Salvador Dali, Bob Dylan, and Rolling Stones' singer, Mick Jagger.

Warhol was the focal-point of 1960s art in New York, with peers and followers alike drawn to his eccentric appeal and disregard for convention. As a leader, he was the epitome of innovation and his creative flair knew no bounds as he sought to experiment with numerous processes and techniques to create his iconic works.

But far from being the aloof genius that his image portrayed, Warhol carefully crafted his persona that helped give birth to a new movement within the art world and cement his legend and legacy which is still analysed and celebrated today.

In researching the life of Warhol, I have uncovered a few key business lessons which I believe are as relevant to leadership now as they ever were. Read on!

1 Disrupt yourself

Decades before the self-disruptors such as Apple and Facebook came along, Warhol was a strong advocate for disrupting your own brand. As long as leaders are solely focused on the competition, they will be following behind.

Instead, leaders should continually innovate in ways that seek to make their organisation better today than it was yesterday. As Warhol put it, "They always say time changes things, but you actually have to change them yourself."

So how does this translate in business? Take marketing for instance. Warhol's work was unique because he didn't specialise in just one medium – he had works of all kinds: paintings, sculptures and silkscreen prints; he even managed to leverage TV, publishing and other channels.

He understood that in a multichannel world, we need to reach out to different people in different channels and mediums – whatever it takes!

The same can be said for business – are we reaching the right group of people using the right tools and channels, and communicating the right message at the right time to them?

Business Lessons from Andy Warhol



Andy Warhol's silkscreen prints of film icon Marilyn Monroe on display at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Pic: 123RF

Many businesses fail to understand this basic tenet that Warhol clearly understood. This could mean disrupting your current approach and channel and introducing a new one.

How comfortable are we in continually disrupting ourselves and our business?

To become legendary like Warhol and Steve Jobs, disruption is a key practice we must ingrain into our business. This could mean failing at first but continually experimenting regardless.

For example, one of the first films by Warhol, *Sleep*, was termed 'anti-film' as it was more than five hours long, in black and white, and focused on his ex-lover. Yet, it didn't stop Warhol from continually experimenting till he got it right.

2 Business is an art form

In the words of Warhol, "Being good in business is the most fascinating kind of art. Making money is art and working is art and good business is the best art." What does Warhol mean by 'business is art'?

I suspect it has to do with being able to carry out our business the same way an artist approaches their work: with curiosity, clarity of purpose, inspiration, flexibility in adapting to changing times, and vision. If we do so, I think we begin to see that the bottom line looks after itself as we focus on the why of what we do.

In many great pieces of art, questions are raised within the piece. In business, fundamental questions must be 'why', followed by 'how' and then 'what' (this is based on the fabulous work by Simon Sinek, called the Golden Circle). *Why* do we do what we do? *How* do we do what we do? *What* is it that we do?

Another aspect that is lost is that business needs to embrace more art, as art helps to differentiate products. Take, for instance, Apple's transformation which has much to do with Jobs incorporating art into its products.

Design, aesthetics, user experience and other emotional 'art-like' elements can transform a utilitarian and common product into a breathtaking showpiece. Warhol did it with the common Campbell Soup can, so can we in our businesses!

Even to this day it's difficult to pin down exactly who Warhol was, or how he saw his overall vision. As a pioneer of pop art, he was forever looking for new – and often unconventional – avenues to bring his work to life. Unlike some artists, it's impossible to place Warhol in any one box – and that's one key element of his unparalleled success.

By being flexible, Warhol had the ability to adapt and change direction as he saw fit, which ultimately helped to build a legacy that continues to be admired today.

Businesses have much to learn about being agile and adaptable like Warhol was.

3 Business is about partnerships

Warhol was the original crowdsourcing pioneer in pop art – he was a master of generating ideas and collaborations from others. It's reported that he once asked a friend what he should create, and was told that he should make "something you see every day that everybody would recognise, something like a can of Campbell's Soup" – and so he did!

Everything from his work in The Factory to his own persona was up for delegation. He would regularly encourage assistants to impersonate him in interviews, where they were free to act however they wished.

Partnership is not just amongst companies and key industry players. Warhol once said, "In the future, everyone will be famous for 15 minutes" and he pretty accurately predicted the situation today.

With the Internet and seamless communication, everyone not only has a voice, they can make or break a brand rather easily. Everyone can be a co-creator or collaborator with our business and brand.

As a business, we need to tap into this huge collective to partner this mass in helping us drive our business forward. This is a huge opportunity to collectively transform your business. Warhol clearly understood this so many years ago.

4 Businesses need to build on their past

Recently, I was having a discussion with a client and he was bemoaning the fact that every time a new leader comes on board, the entire organisation changes, losing its essence and what it was in the past.

Warhol was someone who constantly reinvented himself. However, in every single 'remake', his past was not discarded. According to Donna De Salvo, chief curator at the Whitney Museum in New York City, Warhol "had a sense of his own history". She adds that the mechanics of who he was were visibly evident though he may have changed or tweaked his delivery systems.

This is a key insight for businesses. Many of them, in trying to reinvent themselves for the 21st century, end up losing their legacy and their rich heritage.

Businesses need to reinvent themselves for this new digital age, but they must retain their core, including their values, secret sauce, and the story of who they are.

When you lose your core, your reinvention ends up failing miserably and destroying your business in the process.

There are many more lessons we can learn from the unorthodox Warhol, but if we just apply a few of these lessons to our business, I suspect we too can continuously transform as he did and leave a rich legacy.

Did You Know?

210 *Coca-Cola Bottles* was Andy Warhol's first work to pass the USD1mil mark at Sotheby's art dealership and auction house, selling at USD1.4mil in May 1988. And in July 2018, part of Warhol's *14 Small Electric Chairs* work became the most high-profile art to be sold using cryptocurrencies through London's prestigious Dadiani Fine Art.



Roshan Thiran is the founder and CEO of the Leaderonomics Group and is constantly amazed by the numerous leadership lessons he derives from everyone, including artists like Andy Warhol. As a little boy, Roshan constantly read biographies of great achievers and leaders, and he now hopes his writing will inspire others to make a difference in this world and leave a positive legacy too. Follow Roshan's daily adventures and leadership tips on his LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook pages.





By **ALAN MANLY**
editor@leaderonomics.com

ENTREPRENEURS are by nature interesting people, boldly launching commercial enterprises that risk careers and fortunes. But being a bold risk taker does not always translate into being a social butterfly, and the thought of networking events can send some into a cold sweat.

So, for those looking to make the most of these events as a way to engage business prospects, here are eight key things to help you get started:

1 Where to go?

Just showing up is smart but the question begged is just where should you show up? All entrepreneurs can tell you what market they are targeting but the goal is to be at a networking function that has a room full of potential clients.

All industries have associations that sponsor networking events which are ideal for a newcomer to easily meet with like-minded individuals.

2 Invest in yourself

Prepare for the networking event like a showbiz professional. Practise your elevator pitch as you would a script for a play. Find someone who will be a fair judge.

Allow for the unexpected by having alternate lines just in case you need to improvise your elevator pitch on the run. Then practise these. Practice does make perfect – sounds corny but each practice adds to your confidence in the delivery.

3 Get a card that counts

How easy will it be for anyone to remember you and your products when you give them your business card? They have your name and mostly the company name will suggest what services you offer. Some don't.

Consider assisting your new-found sales prospect by adding your photo to your business card. That will put a face to a name, as they say.

The back of most business cards are blank, so consider putting your service offerings on there to further showcase your value. When you hand over the card to

Up Your Game

8 steps to help you get the most out of a networking event

your new prospect you can politely reference the card in your elevator pitch.

4 Show up early

Arrive at the event a little early. It's always a bit daunting walking into a near-empty room but opportunity can be waiting. The organisers will inevitably be early. Use the opportunity to introduce yourself and ask what profile of business people are likely to be at today's event.

They will love to tell you the full story. With any luck, an organiser will introduce you to the next person to arrive. One introduction already accomplished.

5 Show time

As folks arrive, approach them confidently and introduce yourself as a fellow early bird. You have every reason to be confident about being at this networking event because everyone is there for the same purpose – to network and get business leads.

If you don't feel confident, fake that welcoming smile and keep talking. Ask them what business they're in. Don't feel inhibited about being blunt. They may even be relieved that you have the smarts to not waste their time. Offer to swap cards and check out if they have any potential business for you.

6 Time is money

This event is an investment in your time. The cost is already expended (known as sunk costs to accountants). Now you have the opportunity to turn that sunk cost into a profitable networking event.

Ask yourself, would I pay to talk to this person? If not, you owe it to yourself to move on. Politely excuse yourself and move on to another group or individual.

7 Once more with feeling

After a while you may feel that an event is a time waster. Take heart. Remember that you have spent your time and money being there so give it a few more goes with anyone left in the room. When you least expect someone to be interested, that last one in the room may be the one you were looking for.

There is never a bad time to present your pitch. Even if no one is interested you have gained from the practice. Should your presentation fall flat, that is one more step to success as you know where you got it wrong. There is nothing like audience feedback to help improve a performance.

8 Follow up fast

Success and failure is often the difference between the quick and the dead. You have their business cards, now you must hit that keyboard and thank them for their time and interest and assess their value as a potential lead.

Entrepreneurs who get out and network are well connected. The journey may take a while but after a lot of networking you will find that you are as well-informed as most and maybe, a little more than many.

The challenge of starting a new journey is not new. The quote from Lao Tzu in 500 BC summed it up nicely:

"The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step."

So, be bold and take the first step!



Alan Manly is the founder of Group Colleges Australia and author of *The Unlikely Entrepreneur*. To connect with Alan, email us at editor@leaderonomics.com.



“
People don't expect you to be perfect, nor do they want you to be. You are human, and that means you make mistakes and have flaws.
”

By **MICHELLE SALES**
editor@leaderonomics.com

5 Steps to Becoming a Better Leader

WHAT makes a great leader? The answer to this question has been studied and analysed by organisations and experts for many years. Most recently, prolific author and researcher, Brené Brown has found that strong leadership relies on a sense of belonging and a solid foundation of 'connection' with others.

She describes this connection as “the energy that is created between people when they feel seen, heard and valued – when they can give and receive without judgment”.

Whether you are new to Brown's work or already a fan, here are five life-altering lessons we can learn from her to be a better leader.

1 Be vulnerable

In business, we've always been taught to hide our emotions and to rely on our logic for influence and decision-making. Yet in Brown's pivotal research on vulnerability, she reveals that connecting with others by sharing our feelings and our faults is anything but a weakness.

In fact, it takes true strength to allow yourself to be vulnerable and admit that you do not hold all of the answers or are uncertain about an approach. In an interview with Martha Rosenberg, Brown said, “Vulnerability is the birthplace of connection and the path to the feeling of worthiness. If it doesn't feel vulnerable, the sharing is probably not constructive.”

2 Lean into courage

In *Dare to Lead*, Brown says, “Leadership is not about titles or the corner office. It's about the willingness to step up, put yourself out there, and lean into courage.”

This means you have to cultivate a culture where tough conversations are had and you are willing to take some level of risk. After all, if you always do what you always do, then you will always get what you always get.

Stand up for what you believe in, speak up when no one else will and lead change when everyone else is sitting back watching. This is what a brave leader is.

3 Dare to be you

You earn trust when you demonstrate authenticity, that is, when you show the real you – warts and all. ‘Faking it until you make it’ only gets you so far and for so long. People don't expect you to be perfect, nor do they want you to be. You are human, and that means you make mistakes and have flaws.

Brown explains people who make the most real, authentic connections are those who are willing to let go of who they thought they should be in order to be who they actually are. So then, let yourself be seen.

4 Go slow to go fast

You can't cheat real connection. It has to be built up slowly over time. This is how trust is formed. True trust takes years to build and a second to destroy.

It is no longer enough to focus on remediation, action plans and ‘mopping up’ after a situation has occurred. We must do what we say and take our time to ensure a solid foundation of trust is built, first and foremost. It is this that will lead to a greater connection with our employees, stakeholders, customers and communities.

5 Show compassion

As leaders we are expected to be strategic, rational, bottom-line business people who focus on results. Yet Brown proves that truly fearless

leaders are kind, compassionate and empathic.

The idea of empathy – being able to put yourself in the shoes of others – goes a long way in the most successful of connections. Compassion implies an interpersonal closeness that comes with responsibility, vulnerability and an absence of self-interest.

There is more than adequate evidence now that leaders who practise and value this, become people who others not only want to work for, but fight for.

 Michelle Sales is a highly sought-after speaker, trainer, coach and author who helps senior leaders and their teams to build confidence and maximise their leadership and performance by consciously connecting with others. She is the author of the new whitepaper *The Connection Deficit: Why leaders must bring both head and heart to work to build trust, lift engagement and accelerate organisational results.* To connect with Michelle, email us at editor@leaderonomics.com.

 **DEVELOPING BASIC LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES** There is a big range of competencies that fall under this. Some key ones are decision making, driving change, bonding with others, attention to quality and excellence. Developing these and many more is a process that takes significant time and refining over the years. This is part of Leaderonomics' **Science of Building Leaders**, a framework which indicates important elements that need to be developed at each stage of one's life, in order to empower the individual to become an effective leader. Head to bit.ly/SOBLP1 to find out more.

By **GIHAN PERERA**
editor@leaderonomics.com

Navigate Disruption by Maximising Your Talents

ACCORDING to the World Economic Forum in its most recent *The Future of Jobs* report, the most important skills for the future are not technical, task-oriented skills, but higher-order skills such as creativity, social influence, active learning, and analytical thinking.

The good news is that there are talented, savvy people with those skills. The bad news is that they have a choice of places to work – so will they choose to work with you?

According to XpertHR, finding and keeping high-quality talent will be the top challenge for business leaders in 2019 and beyond. Adopt these three strategic initiatives to maximise the skill and talent in your workforce – so you can avoid disruption and stay ahead of the game.

1 Embrace diversity

According to the DCA-Suncorp Inclusion@Work Index 2018, employees in diverse and inclusive teams are more innovative, more effective, more satisfied with their jobs, and more likely to stay. That's an immediate benefit for your workplace, but it goes further.

In Henry Ford's day, when each worker on an assembly line was assigned a specific role, it was an advantage for that worker to follow instructions strictly. However, those days are long gone.

In our more complex world, the 'experts' don't necessarily have the best expertise, experience, and wisdom to guide your business for future success. Diverse thinking in your team is not just desirable – it's essential. Diversity is not just a 'feel good' initiative – it gives you a strategic advantage in a fast-changing world.



2 Lean in

You're wasting the potential of a diverse workforce if you don't take advantage of that diversity – even if it seems counter-intuitive. For instance, if you see your team members – especially younger members – 'wasting' time on social media during work hours, you might be tempted to restrict, block, limit, or ban technology, but that doesn't help anybody – including yourself – prepare for the future.

Taken to extremes, this behaviour can be distracting or even addictive – but so is the other extreme, where you reject it entirely. Look for the healthy balance in the middle, where you 'lean in' and take the opportunity to learn, assess, review, and evaluate new ideas, behaviours, and practices.

3 Build their judgement

Instead of strict policies that stifle creativity and quickly become obsolete, operate with guidelines that are more flexible and enable people to add their personal touch. Then invest in building good judgement in your team members, so you can trust them to decide when to follow the guidelines, when to deviate from them, and when to stop and check in with you.

As a leader, you have the benefit of experience, which leads to good judgement, which in turn builds wisdom. Your team members don't have that experience, judgement, and wisdom. The best leaders accel-

erate the experience curve by actively building good judgement in their team.

In conclusion

If you've always said your people are your biggest asset, now is the time to invest in them! If you're not already adopting these three principles, don't expect things to change overnight. You can change your mind-set right now, but it takes time and effort for this to filter through the workplace culture. But it's time well spent, and it's critical for future success.



Gihan Perera is a business futurist, speaker, and author who works with business leaders to help them lead and succeed in an uncertain but exciting future. He is the author of Disruption By Design: Leading the change in a fast-changing world. To connect with Gihan, email us at editor@leaderonomics.com.

BUILD TECHNICAL/FUNCTIONAL COMPETENCIES TO SUPPORT VISION
These competencies would be different for various individuals, depending on the needs of their specific roles at any given point in time, as well as working towards one's plans for the future. This is part of Leaderonomics' Science of Building Leaders, a framework which indicates important elements that need to be developed at each stage of one's life, in order to empower the individual to become an effective leader. Head to bit.ly/SOBLPt1 to find out more.

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By **ONG CHENG YEE**
editor@leaderonomics.com

Conquering Stereotypes

How my *dulang* washer grandmother became a business owner

REMEMBER back in school, when you were asked to write about someone you admire for a history project? My sister and I wrote about our maternal grandmother...well, it was more of my sister doing all the research while I copied her work two years later!

Plagiarism concerns aside, I have great respect for my late grandmother. Although illiterate, she managed to start her own business and raise eight children – even sending them to study abroad back in the 60s and 70s.

Having her as an inspiration, I can see how all her five daughters have grown up to be independent, strong-willed and successful in their respective fields.

The early years

My grandmother was born in 1919. As a child, she would follow her mother to the tin mines to earn money as a *dulang* washer (a *dulang* is a big, smooth-surfaced wooden dish used to obtain tin-ore from rivers).

As a young and strong-willed lady, she started leading a team of ladies in negotiating work contracts, and naturally, she became the go-to person for *dulang* washers whenever there were new tin mining projects in the area.

As she learned the ropes of the industry, she struck out on her own and started an *amang* factory. A brief introduction to this old business – *amang* are tin waste deposits which were abundant in the ex-tin mines of Perak, Malaysia.

My grandmother set up a heavy machinery factory that separated heavy materials such as ilmenite (titanium-iron oxide) used in paint manufacturing and zircon (zirconium silicate) commonly used in ceramic industries.

The *amang* factory in Pusing – a small town in Perak – was my ‘playground’ growing up and I spent a lot of time watching her and my mother, who was also working in the factory.

I was never interested in the family business, but writing this article has given me a new level of admiration for the women in my family. Based on my own observations, here are some key leadership characteristics upheld by my grandmother which I believe led to her success.

1 Integrity

As I was growing up, I saw the same old ladies working in the *amang* factory. My grandmother had high integrity in her work and her leadership skills among the group of *dulang* washers early in her career earned her their trust, and they remained loyal to her as she brought them the rewards she had promised.

This is a key leadership characteristic if you want your team to succeed. At times as a leader, you are able to see the vision of the company and where the company is headed. However, it is not the same for your team.

Once you have shown integrity in your work, your team develops trust in you. They will follow your lead with the belief that their hard work will eventually be fruitful.

2 Speaking up

My grandmother was known for being upfront when speaking her mind and sometimes, with a certain level of tough talk. This was a requirement being in a rough business that needed heavy negotiation with (mostly) men for tenders and bids.

The same goes for women climbing the corporate ladder in today’s world (minus the tough talk of course!). A study published in a Harvard Business School article showed that from a man’s point of view, women were seen as incapable of contributing during meetings because they were either not loud enough or they were not able to find a way to interrupt the conversations.

So, speak up!

3 Working hard

Before suffering from a stroke in 1996, my grandmother had the same daily routine of



waking up at 5am and being in the factory as early as 7am.

When I was 11, I used to walk to the Sunday market with my grandmother and I remember feeling how rough her hands were. Her hands were evidence of the hard and harsh work she had done throughout her life to get to where she was.

To be a respected leader, you will need to show that you can dig into the dirt and solve issues.

Although Apple Inc. was established in 1976, success only came when the iMac was introduced in 1998. They achieved bigger success when iPhone was launched in 2007. Steve Jobs is known to have worked closely with his team and he worked hard because innovation doesn’t come overnight.

4 Ability to identify talent

Having the right talent for the right position in your organisation is key. This could be a biased opinion because I view my mother as a talent in the organisation. My grandmother asked my mother if she was interested to join her more than 30 years ago.

Back then, my mother was working as a chief dietitian in the United Kingdom. She knew the periodic table like the back of her hand, wrote contracts for my grandmother during her summer breaks, and maybe that was why my grandmother recruited her.

As a leader, you must be able to identify the competency gaps in your organisation and develop employees accordingly, or recruit the right candidate for the success of your organisation.

Looking back, I would not have had the boldness to take up challenges in my career if it wasn’t for my grandmother who built her family the way she did.

Leadership comes in many different forms and there is no one answer to all situations. The four characteristics above help me in my own leadership journey and I hope they do the same for you.

■ This article was previously published in print.



Cheng Yee is a former head of human resources at Leaderonomics. She enjoys yoga and is passionate about making a positive impact on people’s lives. Get in touch with her by emailing us at editor@leaderonomics.com.

MORAL CHARACTER These are character traits that are deemed to make an individual a ‘good’ human being.

Understanding our values and our strengths in the character traits related to them will enable us to learn how to lead ourselves first, how to lead our teams, and ultimately, how to lead organisations. This includes integrity, generosity, sportsmanship, justice, gratitude. This is part of Leaderonomics’ **Science of Building Leaders**, a framework which indicates important elements that need to be developed at each stage of one’s life, in order to empower the individual to become an effective leader. Head to bit.ly/SOBLPt1 to find out more.

By **SASHE KANAPATHI**

sashe.kanapathi@leaderonomics.com

WE all want to learn, or at least, we say we do. Though, sometimes, I have my doubts if most people genuinely mean this. We also know that learning should result in some sort of a change; ultimately a change of behaviour.

And change is something that leads to anxiety in one way or the other. So how do we make change easier to digest?

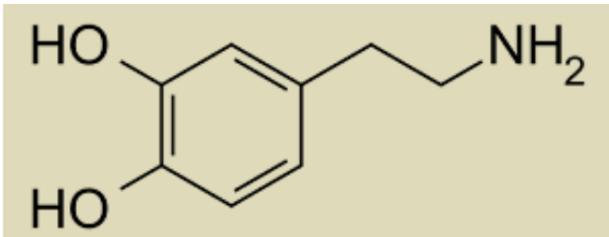
By making it fun, of course.

Did you know that when you are having fun, the excited brain releases more dopamine? Yes, this is the same neurochemical that we associate with mediating pleasure.

Some other helpful benefits of dopamine are to enhance memory, attention and even cognition. So, the more fun you have, the more dopamine in your brain – and as a result, you become more engaged and attentive.

As Martha Burns from *scilearn.com* states, “I like to refer to dopamine as the ‘save button’ in the brain. When dopamine is present during an event or experience, we remember it; when it is absent, nothing seems to stick.”

In that sense, it would be easy to conclude that if learning is made to be fun, then there is a higher chance for learning to be absorbed meaningfully. Hence, we need to ‘dope our learning’.



The chemical dopamine is a neurotransmitter, responsible for sending messages between the brain and different nerve cells of the body.

The idea is to have fun while learning, to enhance the learning experience. In adult education, this is easier said than done as each person has a different way of having fun.

So, how do you deliver a programme to make learning fun for everyone? How do we present content in an exciting and novel way that applies to everyone?

For adults, experience has proven that there are five key components to achieve a fun learning experience:

1 Humour

Humour is universal in its appeal and is something that can be injected by facilitators to engage the learners. It's important not to overdo it of course, so that it isn't distracting. Just the right amount can go a long way to keep engagement levels high.

2 Technology

Technology has now become a part of everyone's lives and something that is second nature to most. It is important to use technology for the value that it provides in making learning accessible.

By using something that is familiar yet provides benefits in terms of speed and complexity at your fingertips, it enhances the learning experience.

3 Experimentation

Experimentation is fun if it entails exploring new concepts in a safe environment. We need to create an environment that allows for failure while engaging the learners' imagination to try out new things.

4 Competition

It's important to allow for competition in learning, as long as it is friendly competition. However, it should also be challenging enough to keep learners motivated. This is a key component of gamification.

5 Benefit

It's important to show learners that the learning is beneficial to them in some way. This can be with rewards (as in gamification), but also show them how it can be applied to real life.

Dope Your Learning

The science behind getting your brain to enjoy work



Of the five aspects of training listed above, the first one, humour, is one that is left to the facilitators. However, the remaining four aspects can be delivered through creative programme design. The most efficient way to deliver this fun learning experience is through simulations.

Simulations come in all shapes and forms. We have simulations that are based on role playing, as well as board-based, and lately things have become more digital in approach. They all provide the four aspects of fun learning experience described above.

Here's a scenario that demonstrates how the five components – in no particular order – are integrated in a simulation.

Simulations need to be able to transpose the participant, preferably using technology (two), into a very specific situation that has a defined objective.

The means of achieving the objective require participants to accomplish tasks that will help them practise the behaviours that the simulation was designed for.

By competing with other people (four), while trying to win (five), participants find themselves trying different behaviours (three). Eventually this leads to an 'aha' moment when either the right behaviour is discovered by one team, or it's shared through an engaging

debrief process (one).

In our experience, we find that the best way to use simulations is by prepping learners with some content beforehand. This gets them primed to the topic and equipped enough to experience the simulation effectively.

If there is no content given, some learners may wind up spending too much of the simulation experience trying to navigate and make sense of the situation at hand instead of learning from the experiential opportunity.

The post-simulation debrief is also as important as the simulation itself to extract the learning and to replay the experience. It also provides context to the activity.

This way, by utilising simulations in any content delivery, we are able to make sure that learning is fun. And fun means more dopamine, which means better absorption as well as retention of the learning material.

By utilising simulations in any content delivery, we are able to make sure that learning is fun.

■ This article was previously published in print.



Sashe is certain that his 19-year career in IT was about leadership and not technology. He is currently the chief operating officer of Leaderonomics Digital and ponders the use of technology in his free time.

By DR TRAVIS BRADBERRY
editor@leaderonomics.com

I am sure you've been asked many times whether you're an introvert or an extrovert. For some people, it's an easy choice, but for most of us, it's difficult to choose one way or the other.

It's hard to choose because the introvert and extrovert dichotomy reflects a tired and outdated view of personality. Personality traits exist along a continuum, and the vast majority of us aren't introverts or extroverts; rather, we fall somewhere in the middle.

Personality consists of a stable set of preferences and tendencies through which we approach the world. Personality traits form at an early age and are fixed by early adulthood. Many important things about you change over the course of your lifetime, but your personality isn't one of them.

Always be yourself, express yourself, have faith in yourself, do not go out and look for a successful personality and duplicate it. – Bruce Lee

The continuum between introversion and extroversion captures one of the most important personality traits. It's troubling that we're encouraged to categorise ourselves one way or the other because there are critical strengths and weaknesses commonly associated with each type.

Adam Grant, a professor of management and psychology from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, set out to study this phenomenon, and his findings are fascinating.

First, he found that two-thirds of people don't strongly identify as introverts or extroverts. These people (i.e. the vast majority of us) are called ambiverts, who have both introverted and extroverted tendencies. The direction ambiverts lean toward varies greatly, depending on the situation.

Think of introversion and extroversion as a spectrum, with ambiversion lying somewhere in the middle (see Figure 1).



Figure 1: The introversion-extroversion spectrum

How ambiversion helps at work

Ambiverts have a distinct advantage over true introverts and extroverts. Because their personality doesn't lean too heavily in either direction, they have a much easier time adjusting their approach to people based on the situation. This enables them to connect more easily and more deeply, with a wider variety of people.

Grant's research also disproved the powerful and widely held notion that the best-performing salespeople are extroverts. He found that ambiverts' greater social flexibility enabled them to outsell all other groups, moving 51 per cent more product per hour than the average salesperson.

Notice how sales increased as extroversion increased, peaking with those who were just moderately extroverted (see Figure 2).

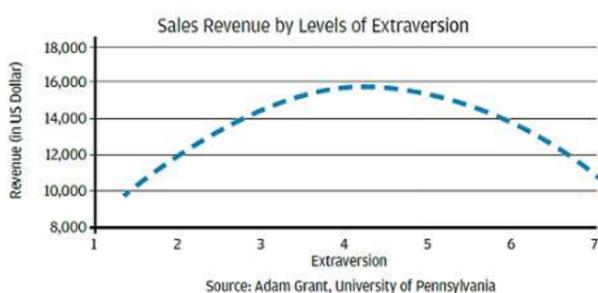


Figure 2

Grant explained the finding this way: "Because they naturally engage in a flexible pattern of talking and listening, ambiverts are likely to express sufficient assertiveness and enthusiasm to persuade and close a sale,

Class Clown or Wallflower?

If you're neither, you could very well be an ambivert



but are more inclined to listen to customers' interests and less vulnerable to appearing too excited or overconfident."

How ambiversion works in the brain

How social you are is largely driven by dopamine, the brain's feel-good hormone. We all have different levels of dopamine-fuelled stimulation in the neocortex (the area of the brain that is responsible for higher mental functions such as language and conscious thought).

Those who naturally have high levels of stimulation tend to be introverts; they try and avoid any extra social stimulation that might make them feel anxious or overwhelmed.

Those with low levels of stimulation tend to be extroverts. Under-stimulation leaves extroverts feeling bored, so they seek social stimulation to feel good.

Most people's level of natural stimulation don't reach great extremes, though it does fluctuate. Sometimes you may feel the need to seek out stimulation, while other times, you may avoid it.

Finding out whether you're an ambivert

It's important to pin down where you fall in the introversion/extroversion scale. By increasing the awareness of your type, you can develop a better sense of your tendencies and play to your strengths.

If you think that you might be an ambivert, but aren't certain, see how many of the following statements apply to you. If most of them apply, you're most likely an ambivert.

- I can perform tasks alone or in a group. I don't have much preference either way.
- Social settings don't make me uncomfortable, but I get tired of being around people too much.
- Being the centre of attention is fun for me, but I don't like it to last.
- Some people think I'm quiet, while others think I'm highly social.
- I don't always need to be moving, but too much downtime makes me bored.
- I can get lost in my own thoughts just as easily as I can lose myself in a conversation.

- Small talk doesn't make me uncomfortable, but it does get boring.
- When it comes to trusting other people, sometimes I'm sceptical, and other times, I dive right in.
- If I spend too much time alone, I get bored, yet too much time around people leaves me feeling drained.

The trick to being an ambivert is knowing when to force yourself to lean toward one side of the spectrum when it isn't happening naturally.

For example, at a networking event, a self-aware ambivert will lean toward the extroverted side of the scale, even when it has been a long day and he or she has had enough of people. Mismatching your approach to the situation can be frustrating, ineffective, and demoralising for ambiverts.

Bringing it all together

A research has been conducted with over a million people and it was found that those in the upper echelon of performance at work also tend to be highly self-aware (90 per cent of them, in fact).

By gaining a better sense of where you fall on the introversion/extroversion scale, you can build insight into your tendencies and preferences, which increases your self-awareness and emotional intelligence. This will help you improve your performance.

■ This article was previously published in print.



Dr Travis Bradberry is the co-author of the #1 bestselling book, Emotional Intelligence 2.0, and the co-founder of TalentSmart, the world's leading provider of emotional intelligence tests and training, serving more than 75% of Fortune 500 companies. His bestselling books have been translated into 25 languages and are available in more than 150 countries. Dr Bradberry has written for, or has been covered by, Newsweek, BusinessWeek, Fortune, Forbes, Fast Company, Inc., USA Today, The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post, and The Harvard Business Review. Would you consider yourself an introvert, extrovert or an ambivert? Let us know at editor@leaderonomics.com.

Self-Awareness: An 'Omne Trium Perfectum' View

Things that come in threes are perfect

By **EVELYN TEH**

evelyn.teh@leaderonomics.com

BENJAMIN Franklin once said, "There are three things extremely hard: steel, a diamond, and to know one's self."

If the founding father of the United States and world-renowned polymath says that, it sheds some light on why self-awareness remains a challenge to most leaders, even if it is probably one of the most overstated concepts of leadership.

The consequential question to what seems to be a challenging journey is this: Are we even capable of developing self-awareness?

Firstly, self-awareness at its most basic is our capability for consciousness in recognising ourselves as distinct from our surroundings. Scientific research shows that this process happens in the wrinkly part of our brain known as the cerebral cortex. Interestingly, even with a damaged cerebral cortex, we are still able to recognise ourselves.

The argument then is the evidence that human beings are naturally wired to be conscious. For the sceptics who question whether everyone can develop self-awareness, the evidence points to a strong 'yes'. We have the biological endowment, but are we putting in the developmental efforts?

Three components of healthy self-awareness

Preceding the effort to decide on what needs to be done in a developmental journey of self-awareness is the understanding of what defines self-awareness beyond consciousness.

There are varied definitions but most agree that consciousness reflects an ability to think while self-awareness is the next level in which an individual is capable of thinking about their thoughts (metacognition).

For example, babies develop consciousness the moment they are born (i.e. they respond to stimulus) but it is only in the first few years of life that they start developing a sense of self which allows them to distinguish their perspectives from adults' perspectives. This sense of self may include our thoughts, emotions, strengths, weaknesses, values, needs, etc.

In terms of leadership, the first trinity consists of three key components that are present for healthy self-awareness – honesty, action and self-other intention.

In Daniel Goleman's study on emotional intelligence, he found that leaders that rise and stay at the top of the organisation are characterised by a strong sense of self-awareness. This definition of self-awareness does not deviate much from what we defined earlier, but it does stress a strong value of honesty in our self-evaluation.

The argument is that a view that is neither overly critical nor unrealistically hopeful is key to a leader's performance given that they become experts between the interplay of their own strengths and weaknesses.

Self-awareness is also commonly viewed to be a passive act of thinking whereby the focus is just a mere contemplation of one's thoughts while leadership has a strong basis in proactive action. A high level of self-awareness always comes with action because these individuals understand that thoughts are stagnant until it produces a tangible action.

Self-aware leadership is about making intentional and informed decisions in the best time through the basic act of monitoring and controlling their thoughts (i.e. managing subliminal biasness).

Finally, there needs to be a differentiation between self-awareness and other concepts with negative connotations such as self-absorption.

While both concepts focus on the self, self-awareness is an inward focus that is driven by one's connec-

tion to the environment. It is the act of taking in the feedback from the environment and triangulating these thoughts with our own perspective before producing an action plan that is aligned with situational considerations.

With self-absorption, there is an unbalanced emphasis on the self in the interplay of self-other intention despite an initial inward focus because the succeeding action is one that is myopic and ignores environmental cues.

So far, I have sought to define self-awareness and to reiterate three key components of healthy self-awareness. But what would it mean to leaders?

Lauren Zalaznick, who sits on the board of directors for Shazam, sums it up in two sentences, "Throughout your career you hear lots of feedback, if you hear feedback and don't agree with it, it doesn't matter what you think. Truth is you are being perceived that way."

Harsh. Yet sensible. Leaders who understand this reality and seek to increase their self-awareness are able to position themselves better to manage different perceptions.

Consequently, their leadership capabilities are reinforced in three areas – leading in a VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous) environment, leading recovery and leading in authenticity.

Three outcomes of self-aware leadership

VUCA is a term currently used to describe the global environment characterised by volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity. Leading in such an environment requires that the leader have strong inner resources (i.e. experience, knowledge and values) that can be leveraged to increase their situational awareness in a disrupted external world.

Top leaders with a strong level of self-awareness realise that certain strengths can be weaknesses depending on the context. Take, for example, Senator John McCain's presidential campaign in the 2008 United States elections. McCain was famous for his independent mind and quick action which led him to

decide to put his campaign on hold in order to address the financial crisis.

However, in addressing the crisis, he made strong yet erratic statements (i.e. declaring the economy to be fundamentally sound and then attacking Wall Street) which reduced the public's confidence in his ability to make judgments.

In this case, while the situation provided a good opportunity to the Senator to showcase his leadership, misplaying his quick-mindedness became an example of how a leader can fail to effectively adapt one's leadership to the needs of a situation. Had he taken the time to step back and consider an intentional response, he likely would have acted prudently.

In 2004, David Pottruck was fired from his position as the chief executive officer (CEO) of flailing financial services company Charles Schwab. What shocked him was that his dismissal had been so quick.

He knew that the bad organisational performance reflected risk in his position but given he had been co-CEO, Charles Schwab's protégé and partner – shouldn't he have been given a second chance?

The unforgiving reality reflected his lack of awareness about his position, yet he took his first step in self-awareness in leading his recovery by accepting the dismissal as a temporary setback rather than an ultimate failure.

As he moved through his transitional period of ex-CEO to entrepreneur, he relied heavily on his ability to reflect and evaluate his situation in keeping him grounded. What resulted from this new-found self-awareness was a realisation that while the past was good, it had its share of horrible times; times he would not choose to live again.

In addition, it gave him a clearer hindsight as he was able to put under the microscope all the bad decisions he had made in Charles Schwab that had led him to his situation. It took a year of transition but ultimately, as a leader, Pottruck chose to look inward and work on himself as opposed to blaming others in leading his recovery journey.





ture (i.e. the amygdala). It functions as an alarm system in the case of an identity threat.

For leaders, this ego system can go into overdrive especially where the influence of power is concerned. A study conducted by neuroscientist Sukhvinder Obhi from Wilfrid Laurier University in Ontario showed that the presence of power clouds our ability to empathise.

When there is a change in perception of power especially when we feel more powerful than others, results of the study show that this shift reduces our ability to empathise. When our ability to empathise is reduced, we are less accurate in reading others, which then diminishes the plausibility of our self 'maps'.

As self-awareness is derived in relation to others, less accurate maps decrease our capability to respond to our environment optimally. A related barrier is fear, which is also attributed when our amygdala is in overdrive. For example, the fear of being alone can cause significant discomfort.

Seeing that being self-aware is often assisted by temporary physical aloneness (i.e. reflection time) and can result in realisations that we prefer not to know otherwise, it is understandable why developing self-awareness can be a significant challenge among humans wired for relationships.

Finally, being naive and inexperienced can prove to be a hindrance in developing stronger self-awareness as leaders have a myopic view of the superhero leader, believing they are truly the only ones who can save the world. Again, discounting external perspectives even with the best intentions is likely to lead to immature decisions and weak leadership.

Three key techniques to developing self-awareness

Nevertheless, as with all barriers, there will be weapons to break it down. We look at three key techniques that could possibly break barriers and build our capacity in developing self-awareness, which in turn will lead to better leadership.

Building mindfulness is the first key solution as simple acts such as meditation have shown to activate our parasympathetic system which increases the capability of self-awareness and openness to new ideas – at least based on research by Professor Richard Boyatzis, a well-known thought leader in organisational behaviour.

This mindfulness also helps overcome the primal emotional system we have and stop ego and fear from taking over the next time we try to access our self-awareness.

Next, self-awareness may be derived from the self but it does not occur in just that vacuum. Continually collecting experiences not only adds to our internal information base but the constant exposure to new experiences allows us to experiment our alignment with different situations and create convergence between our true north and the external world.

Finally, since self-awareness works in a loop with our external environment, seek to engineer your environment so it is the most fertile for you to develop your self-awareness. Research by the

Centre of Creative Leadership showed that constantly acquiring honest and truthful feedback can help build self-awareness, especially when it comes from someone credible like a current boss.

Moreover, Jim Roth suggests that we are the sum of the five people we are closest with which reminds us that we need to prune our network to ensure that we are surrounded by those who are best suited to provide us with external perspectives and data to triangulate with.

Conceptually, self-awareness seems to be an exercise on our own. Actually, it is best as an exercise with others.

To conclude, leaders are also human beings and there is strong bearing on a healthy level of self-awareness to build a strong true north within the leader to withstand external pressures. It won't be the easiest of journeys, but like diamonds in the rough, our self-awareness becomes a gem through significant refining and polishing.

There will be a plethora of information and courses that promise the 'how-tos' of leadership but every perspective is a new light shed on self-awareness – just like this article's *omne trium perfectum* (Latin phrase which means 'everything that comes in three is perfect') view of self-awareness.

It remains paradoxical that self-awareness slows us down to speed ourselves up as better leaders. Yet, isn't that what leadership has always been, i.e. managing paradoxes?

A high level of self-awareness always comes with action because these individuals understand that thoughts are stagnant until it produces a tangible action.

Leading recovery can also be extrapolated to an organisational level such as Richard Branson's story of his company's venture into Virgin Cola, which was a big failure in the organisation. Branson is a keen advocate for mistakes as a leverage for self-awareness.

He believes that we can learn from mistakes to be better at self-awareness, just as how he looked inward with regards to Virgin Cola's failure and realised that the failure was a result of overconfidence in repeating previous successful models – not realising that there were problems with the idea (i.e. not aligned with Virgin's core positioning).

Finally, self-awareness is key in leading authentically. We show a preference for leaders who are self-assured enough to lead, but also humble enough to know when they do not have all the reins.

Research shows that authentic leaders tend to be able to create meaningful connections with their followers which then translates to strong performance. Authentic leadership in this aspect refers to the knowledge of one's own strengths and weaknesses, garnering the leader's organisational and personal credibility.

John Mackey, co-founder and CEO of Whole Foods is a strong believer that a leader's personal growth translates to an organisation's growth. As an advocate for conscious capitalism and leadership, Mackey often attributes his ability to look inward as the reason why he has a purpose which aligns with his business growth and, ultimately, the growth of conscious business leaders globally.

Three barriers to developing self-awareness

Each leader's story mentioned above and research put forth would rationally give strong support in the case of a leader's need for self-awareness. Regardless, in ensuring the success of such development, there are possible barriers.

This article looks at three main hindrances to obtaining stronger self-awareness – the human's ego, naivety and fear. To begin with, humans have an in-built ego system usually powered by the brain's emotional struc-



Evelyn is a former member of the Talent Acceleration Programmes (TAP) team in Leaderonomics. To engage with her, email us at editor@leaderonomics.com.

Leading Apple with Steve Jobs

Lessons from the visionary leader

By **KOH EARN SOO & TEAM**
editor@leaderonomics.com

WHILE there are many books on Steve Jobs, none is written by someone who worked side by side with Jobs like this book, *Leading Apple with Steve Jobs*.

Jay Elliot was vice president (VP) of human resources and then a senior VP of Apple. Yet Elliot learned much from Jobs on how to run a business by observing him up close.

Both were motivated by the vision of changing the world. Elliot penned down these management and leadership lessons hoping they will help us inspire our people to give their best at work.

Everything starts with an inspiring vision

Jobs' management style broke every rule companies had adhered to since the Industrial Revolution but it has made Apple possibly the most successful organisation in the history of business.

From the very start, Jobs lived by true leadership, not textbook leadership. Jobs knew that creating great products that changed the world does not start with product development; it starts with a vision.

His vision on how computers and people could interact, how technology could be friendly, human and appealing led to a series of great products. Offering a long-term vision gets people excited. However, it must come from true passion.

Jobs saw that his role was not clearing the way and gathering the different parts of the organisation for key projects. Instead, his job was to push and make the team better and come up with greater visions of how it could be.

In one of the many personal conversations Elliot had with Jobs, he came to the conclusion that leadership is not about pedigree but it is about the individual, the person's beliefs and personal commitment. Vision and passion are more vital than credentials.

Jobs understood that every powerful business vision has to be based on customer experience and not on the lowest cost or most impressive technology. The best example is the computer mouse. He saw that with the mouse and the graphic user interface, users would have quicker and easier access for learning and usage of the computer.

The company's vision must also be embraced by your vendors and partners.

Once, a potential vendor came to demonstrate a disk drive to Jobs. Their big mistake was that they set up the demo using IBM MS-DOS computers. The moment Jobs came and saw the machines, he turned and left. The silence was deafening.

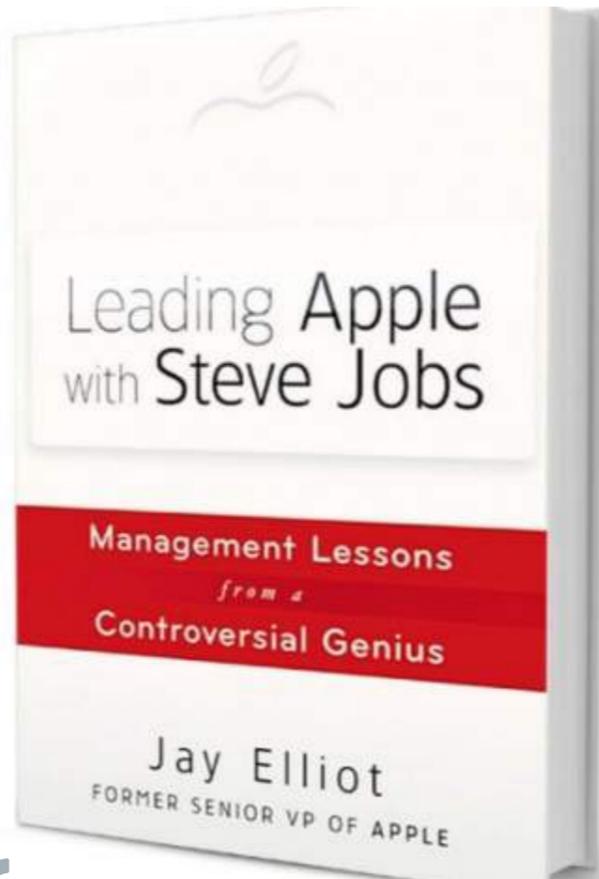
One common trap for many companies is the acquisition of a new company without ensuring that the culture of the company is a good and matching fit. If you are not careful, such a move can water down your vision and culture.

People need to be reminded constantly of the company's vision. One of the ways is to give your team a special identity.

One day, Jobs came to Elliot after a dinner that he had had with Jay Chiat of Jay/Chiat Advertising. He told Elliot that they came up with a way to strengthen the culture of the Macintosh (Mac) development team. The concept is "Pirates! Not the Navy."

The Mac team started being rebellious but was getting too big and bureaucratic, and becoming more like the 'navy' each day. So during an off-site meeting, Jobs explained that Mac was now a 'pirate' organisation and what it meant, thus setting the tone and direction of the Mac team.

No team member doubted that they were pirates and Jobs was the pirate captain. The work can be very



“People need to be reminded constantly of the company's vision. One of the ways is to give your team a special identity.”

demanding but there was a sense of being privileged to be part of a team that can never be duplicated.

As a result, people were excited and could not wait to get to work. Good managers have tried to create that kind of pirate culture where people are doing their best work.

Many have written about Jobs' negative management styles.

Elliot agrees that Jobs was often difficult and controversial but Elliot does not allow offences to get in the way because he realised the privilege of working with a visionary genius.

Jobs' business philosophy and values

Jobs and Elliot spent much time discussing the core values of Apple. Jobs wanted Apple to be based on values, i.e. values that will not exchange the integrity of the product for profit.

Apple is to be the value leader and not the price leader. Goals are important but how they reach the goals are equally important.

After some long discussions, Elliot came up with a document on Apple's business principles that included the following:

- To use the laws of human engineering to create user-friendly products that are simple and easy to use; that they become natural extensions of the users
- To create an unmatched worldwide customer service organisation to serve retailers, distributors and technical support centres.

The need for creating guidelines for Apple's values came from a negative incident in 1981, when then CEO Mike "Scotty" Scott was unhappy seeing a group of 30 Apple employees seemingly hanging around doing nothing.

At that time, Scotty was frustrated with the failure of the Apple III and he blamed mismanagement for the failure. He decided to make a point by sacking some employees even though there were no economic reasons for that.

About 30 of them were affected, including some very talented engineers. It was a bad decision and the incident was nicknamed Black Wednesday.

As a result, there was a major reshuffling of top management whereby Scotty left Apple not long after.

Consequently, a task force was created to come up with a statement of Apple's values.

It was important that Apple's values were embraced by every Apple worker worldwide. That was achieved by inculcating these in every new employee worldwide and having new Apple managers go through a refresher in their leadership training. During their visits, key executives monitor how these values are implemented all over the world.

After Jobs left Apple, CEO John Sculley knew it was vitally important to assure the staff that Jobs' departure would not affect the future of the company. Sculley understood the power of Apple's culture, and to be successful he needed to fully support and reinforce that culture.

The return of the head pirate

Even when Jobs was running NeXT, he kept in touch with what was going on at Apple. He complained to Elliot that it was a mistake for Apple to come up with products for every market segment; personal, business, education and so forth.

Later, when Jobs returned, he quickly reorganised the company to focus on products. One of the biggest advantages for Jobs after his return was that the Apple culture that was established in 1981 was still strong and alive despite top management changes.

Jobs' early action plans were to focus on three key areas:

1. Rethink product strategy. He decided it was important to focus on products that were true to Apple's core business and not try to sell a multitude of products.

2. Stop infighting among executives and managers. Disagreements are inevitable when brilliant people try to solve problems together. Jobs wanted these conflicts to be handled well, and not allow them to fester and lead to destructive behaviours.

3. Create a positive environment of teamwork across the different disciplines, from product concept to sales.

People like to work in companies with strong and well-articulated values like Apple. Besides embracing those values and culture, employees also need to be a reflection of the company's customers.

Apple's set of values includes:

- **Empathy for the users** – interested in solving customer problems without compromising ethics in the name of profit
- **Aggressiveness** – set aggressive goals and push hard to build products that will change how people work and live
- **Positive social contribution** – be a positive social asset in communities where they operate and make the world a better place
- **Innovation and vision** – to develop great products that are new and needed
- **Individual performance** – set and expect higher personal commitment and performance than the norm
- **Team spirit** – each job is too big for an individual; teamwork is critical for Apple's success
- **Quality** – quality that will earn the respect and loyalty of customers
- **Individual reward** – recognise the contribution of each individual and therefore, they should be rewarded accordingly (rewards must be psychological as well as financial)
- **Great management** – the attitudes of managers towards people are of utmost importance – management is responsible to create an environment where Apple's values thrive.

 Koh Earn Soo and his team take the best books and summarise them into shorter, more readable content in the hope of inspiring people to read and learn more. To engage with Earn Soo, email him at editor@leaderonomics.com.

The Leaderonomics Show



ABDUL SHUKOOR
COO of Aurora Hotels International



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Making the Most Out of a Fluke

Hospitality industry insights from a seasoned hotelier

By **SANDY CLARKE**
editor@leaderonomics.com

THE American entrepreneur James Cash “J. C.” Penney Jr. once said that courteous treatment of customers makes them a walking advertisement for any organisation.

If there’s one industry that rises and falls by its reputation among customers, it’s the hotel business – a handful of bad reviews can be enough to turn away clientele regardless of what the others say.

For Abdul Shukoor, chief operating officer (COO) of Aurora Hotels International, his 27 years as a hotelier has impressed upon him the importance of passion when it comes to delivering excellent service.

Talking about his start in hospitality on *The Leaderonomics Show*, Abdul told host Nigesh Armon that his foray into the world of hotels was a fluke. After finishing his O-levels, he became a door-to-door salesman selling encyclopaedias for children.

By chance, he came across one buyer who praised his communication skills and suggested Abdul try out for a position at the Grand Hyatt in Singapore. He soon landed a job as a waiter and dishwasher at the plush hotel and has spent the past three decades working his way up the ladder.

Abdul became passionate about the hotel business, and believes that being successful in our careers comes down to how much of ourselves we put into serving others and going above and beyond expectations.

His drive and determination was clear early in Abdul’s career, as he funded his MBA studies while transitioning between his role as banquet and conference manager at Amara Hotels and Resorts, and as assistant director of food and beverages for the Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group.

He told Nigesh, “It was a bit difficult having to cope with work. Working in a hotel, you’re married to the

hotel life. You work about 16 hours per day, and so it was tough for me to complete my MBA, but eventually I did it within three or four years.”

Cultural differences

The challenges didn’t stop there. Over the years, Abdul has worked in a number of countries including Singapore, Russia, Jordan, and Qatar. Although the industry itself is similar across the board, Abdul revealed that cultural considerations are crucial when working in international hotels.

He said, “Hospitality is a culture – wherever you go, it’s pretty much the same. But it sort of changes my perspective from one place to another in terms of the people you work with and develop. It was a challenge in the beginning, but eventually I was able to overcome them.

“In Qatar, we had more than 70 nationalities working for us, and the property I was managing is about 40 minutes into the desert, facing the Gulf Sea. In this location, you have people from all walks of life and so it’s not easy for you to call them all together and speak in the same way.

“You have various cultures and different kinds of understanding, so it wasn’t so easy back then dealing with different nationalities when the country was still so-called third world.”

Abdul also spoke about the importance of treating customers equally, and that leaders should aim to work with their teams to go beyond the expectations of their clientele – especially within the service industry where customers have plenty of choices.

Explore the world

Having started out as a waiter and dishwasher, Abdul prides himself on having established himself as a well-rounded hotelier. It’s clear that having first-hand experience of the hotel business at all levels has led Abdul to develop a strong sense of duty towards his

customers, as well as those whom he leads and works alongside.

Adding to his MBA, Abdul also possesses a Diploma in Hospitality Management from EI-AHMA, United States of America (USA); a Master of Wine certificate from Campbell California, USA; and he is also accredited by the American Academy of Hospitality Sciences.

As he spoke about his professional journey, it’s clear that Abdul values the importance of experiential learning within the industry combined with formal learning that deepens his knowledge and understanding of the hotel business.

Commenting on his time at Aurora, he said, “In my current role, I’m more focused on business development, setting strategies and providing strategic leadership for the board of directors and owners. In terms of driving the brand forward, I’m also assisting in creating the full DNA of the brands that we have.”

When asked what advice he would give to young people looking to emulate his career trajectory, Abdul highlighted the value of getting out there and exploring the kinds of opportunities on offer. This, he says, will help young people to develop their own style and see what suits them best in their professional lives.

He added, “Go out there and experience things for yourself and don’t be afraid to fail and get lost – that’s how you’ll discover yourself. I’ve always believed in the quote which says, ‘Some men see things as they are, and ask why. I dream of things that never were, and ask why not.’”



Sandy is a former managing editor at Leaderonomics, and previously enjoyed 10 years as a journalist and broadcaster in the UK. He has been fortunate to gain valuable insights into what makes us tick, which has deepened his interests in leadership, emotions, mindfulness, and human behaviour. Get in touch with him by emailing editor@leaderonomics.com.



R Gopalakrishnan

"WE LIVE IN THREE WORLDS, I THINK OF THEM AS THREE CIRCLES WHICH ARE OVERLAPPING."



This video is available at bit.ly/GopalTLS. For more The Leaderonomics Show videos, head to bit.ly/TheLDRShow.

By **CINDY YAP**
editor@leaderonomics.com

RGOPALAKRISHNAN or Gopal, as he is fondly known, has an impressive 50 years of experience in senior leadership positions and an illustrious academic history to boot.

The director of Tata Sons studied physics at Calcutta University, engineering at Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Kharagpur and attended the Advanced Management Programme at Harvard Business School.

His career began at Hindustan Unilever as a management trainee in 1967. From there, he worked his way up. Twenty years later, he was appointed executive director of exports and chairman of Unilever Arabia in 1991 to establish and manage Unilever's consumer products business in the Arab countries.

After three decades in Unilever, he subsequently joined Tata Sons, a holding company to The Tata Group, as executive director in 1998.

The essence of great leaders

When *The Leaderonomics Show* asks for his take on leadership, Gopal comments that "a leader is a person who can gain followers".

"There is no leader without followers and no followers without a leader. And to get people attracted, a leader should touch hearts. People follow you when you touch their hearts. People listen to you when you touch their minds," he says.

"A complete human being can be touched when you touch the mind and the heart of a person. Leaders who speak to the mind are many. But leaders who can touch your heart are fewer," shares Gopal.

As for how leaders can touch the hearts of people, Gopal says that self-awareness is fundamental. "The key issue is to become self-aware without becoming psychotic or a 'God-man'. We are not talking about this category of people."

Self-awareness and balance

Sharing his nuggets of wisdom on self-awareness, Gopal says that there are four stages in which our activities are carried out. There is immersion (where you are focused on what you are doing), operation (when you perform the act of doing something), contemplation and reflection.

He calls it 'a route of contemplation and reflection', and writes about it in his first book, *The Case of the Bonsai Manager: Lessons for Managers on Intuition*, published in 2007. If you follow this cycle, says Gopal,

The Three Worlds

Tata Sons director talks about self-awareness and balance

you become increasingly aware of what effect you have on others.

"For example, if I am egoistic or a sharp-tongued leader (which all of us are capable of becoming in one way or another), if I sit back, reflect and contemplate, I may have a feeling that 'Oh, I didn't intend to be rude – but it turned out that he thought I was rude, so I must change the way I speak to him.' That is the essence of self-awareness."

"It comes from within you. Many leaders, especially those who are already successful, become self-obsessed and think they are moving the world. When you get into that mode, you cease to be self-aware."

Another way to increase self-awareness is to get a life partner, he says. "If you want to buy one ticket for self-awareness, get married!" Gopal chuckles.

He calls it 'The Clementine Effect'. The story goes that one day during the Second World War, Clementine (Winston Churchill's wife) wrote a letter to her husband to express concern about how people disliked his way of talking.

She wrote: "My dear Winston, nothing in the world I love more than you. I don't want bad people to say bad things about you. Would you please mend your ways?"

"So, your husband or wife will always tell you what's wrong with you!" Gopal laughs.

Key to success

Gopal shares thoughts on what it takes to maintain balance and succeed in his book, *When the Penny Drops: Learning What's Not Taught*.

Published in 2010, Gopal delves into the three worlds of a manager – the inner world, the world of relationships and the world of getting things done.

"I think of the three worlds as three overlapping and interconnected circles," he says, explaining the three worlds as follows:

1. My own world

In my world, I've got my own ambitions, dreams, hang-ups, concerns, anxieties and phobias. They are mine, they stay with me and never get expressed, though others may notice them.

2. The world of relationships with others

No human being is an island. Everybody has to relate and talk to someone, even if you are an unfriendly person. You have to get your food from somebody. There is a constant connection. Some people receive more messages, others receive less.

3. A world of getting things done

There are seven billion people on this planet. All of us have to get something done to be economically useful. Those who don't, don't survive.

Gopal explains that we are constantly moving from one world to another without being aware of time. Each of us, regardless of our level of education, religion or colour of skin, move in and out of these worlds in a unique way. Each of our unique pathways account for our distinct personalities and determine our style of leadership.

According to Gopal, managers learn through the experiences of managing situations in each of the three worlds. A company's and an individual's development depends on how well these lessons are learnt and the balance maintained between them.

For leaders aspiring to be truly great, Gopal has a piece of advice: "It's what you do and encounter that makes a leader, not how you are born. Your DNA has an influence, but it's not the sole determining element," he quips. "We are all born the same."

"Of course, if I was born very poor, without access to education, school or health, it can be a severe disadvantage, but it is not the single biggest determining factor. When you go through life experiences, you are influenced by these experiences and that's how you learn what nobody has taught you."

Gopal likens it to getting the 'aha' feeling – when the penny drops and you finally understand. At the end of the day, these experiences and 'penny drop' moments matter most in moulding a successful leader, he concludes.



Cindy Yap is a corporate professional who believes in seeking new ways to learn in this journey of life. To engage with her, email us at editor@leaderonomics.com.

Visionaries: Risky Business

The three pillars of incredible leadership

By **ROB WYSE**
editor@leaderonomics.com

THE company visionary is the leader who poses the biggest leadership risk to the business. Visionaries, by nature, are overly optimistic risk takers. After all, they guide the organisation through transitions or difficult organisational eras.

Or, for a start-up they often create products that resonate with customers once they see them, but where the customer themselves would not have thought to ask for such a product. They are the leaders who take a company through the unknown.

It is why they often lead start-ups and turnarounds. Those companies need confident risk takers to change the status quo. These companies often have 'nothing to lose' or 'no choice'. They need to take the right risks or perish. It is the visionary leader who can encourage and ignite a company to execute the vision.

However, these leaders often fail to follow through and bring their ideas to fruition. This was depicted in a 2019 article in *Harvard Business Review* entitled *Why Visionary Leadership Fails*. It notes that "...visionary leadership is not just important for senior managers; it also matters for middle and lower level managers, who play a key role in carrying out strategic change."

In other words, if the vision is not communicated and not executed throughout the organisation, the company is at higher risk for failure. This is highlighted by research from a team of business school professors at Duke, Vanderbilt, and Harvard. The research indicates that founder-run companies are less productive and more poorly managed than chief executives who were not founders.

So, being a great visionary is not enough to be a great leader. While visionaries see the future and can infectiously inspire others, they can also be overly optimistic and not anticipate where things can go awry.

The obvious choice for one of the greatest visionary leaders was Steve Jobs. From the first Mac to the iPhone, he saw where the world was heading – then willed and motivated the company to get there. One might argue that today's heralded leader is Jeff Bezos of Amazon.

Vision is not enough

Being a visionary is just one of three pillars of incredible leadership. The other two pillars are 'managers of execution' and 'relationship builders'. Between a well-articulated vision and 'turning it into reality' requires what I call 'connecting the dots'. And, to connect the dots does require execution and relationships.

The leaders who have the ability to connect the dots excel at all three pillars of leadership. Those leaders are one in a thousand at best. Looking at Jobs, he might be the closest. He could communicate the vision, and demand relentless execution, yet he was reported to be an abusive manager.

Walter Isaacson – the former chief executive officer (CEO) of the Aspen Institute, professor at Tulane, and



the author of *Steve Jobs* and other biographies – wrote in a 2012 article in the *Harvard Business Review* that "petulance and impatience were part and parcel of his perfectionism".

Isaacson then asked Jobs if he had a tendency to be rough on people. Jobs replied, "Look at the results... we got some amazing things done." So, Jobs was not a relationship builder. Two out of three leadership pillars can get you very far.

Visionaries who do not excel in either of the two other pillars need to recognise his or her shortcomings and fill in the gaps. It underscores that developing the vision for a company requires introspection and self-awareness by the leader. And, the self-awareness is beyond shortcomings in talent.

Maintaining a balanced approach

Visionaries can be overly impractical and unrealistic about market changes and outside threats. Case-in-point is I have seen CEOs at some start-ups change the vision with each announcement of a competitor. Or, they walk out of a meeting with a prospect to continuously change the strategy.

These leaders are incapable of delivering on one of their most important responsibilities: establishing and communicating a clear direction for the company and then reinforcing it repeatedly.

Their schizophrenic reactions to outside forces destroy the company's ability to accomplish anything. While a great leader is able to receive new data and adjust accordingly, they need to be able to determine what is real and what is not.

The greatest visionaries have laser focus. They are able to identify a few key objectives and keep the organisation zeroed in on those few. For some visionaries, they are more in love with communicating a new vision than executing the one at hand.

Therefore, a great visionary is also a great editor. He or she considers options for the company's future, but gets the organisation to stick to two or three more important things.

A great visionary is inspiring and exciting and leads a company to incredible places. A visionary leader out of touch with themselves is risky business.



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

DEVELOP VISION FOR ORGANISATION
Ability to go beyond a vision for self, combining it with a collective in order to come up with a common vision. This is part of Leaderonomics' **Science of Building Leaders**, a framework which indicates important elements that need to be developed at each stage of one's life, in order to empower the individual to become an effective leader. Head to bit.ly/SOBLPt1 to find out more.



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The Science of Building Leaders

Leadership development is a process that can be learnt and replicated

By **ROSHAN THIRAN**

roshan.thiran@leaderonomics.com

IN 2001, I took on a new assignment at the organisation I was working in at that point – General Electric (GE). Part of the assignment with GE Crotonville, GE’s leadership development centre, was to revamp our leadership curriculum as a new chief executive officer (CEO) had recently taken over. I was excited about this new task as it required meeting leaders all over the world and trying to understand what leadership really was.

After a couple of years of working on the curriculum, I realised that, in spite of having a great and robust leadership curriculum in place, something was missing. We worked really hard to develop leadership competencies but a huge part of great leadership formation was dictated by things that happened in a person’s childhood – their character development.

After I left GE, I continued to work on reconciling this complex conundrum. Organisations spend millions of dollars developing leadership competencies in their employees, but as a society we don’t spend much time or effort developing each child’s character and this has serious repercussions on their leadership journey.

This led me to develop a framework I like to call the Science of Building Leaders. After reviewing extensive research in the field, personal experiences in the workplace, and insights from leaders across the world, I developed a process of how different elements at different periods of a person’s life build upon each other to enable the person to become a leader. Some end up like Mother Teresa, Ben Franklin or Mahatma Gandhi whilst others become Hitler, Jeffrey Skilling or other bad leaders.

Character is one element that distinguishes great leaders from bad ones but there are many other factors such as trauma, values, early role models, friendships in the teenage years, and experiences accumulated in their early adult years that drive personal purpose and vision. Each of these elements, connected together, creates different nodes that effectively determine a person’s leadership journey and effectiveness.

The main idea behind this Science of Building Leaders research is that different aspects of leadership development occur at different points in an individual’s life. I have broken it into three key elements – foundational leadership, emerging leadership and executing leadership – which are further broken down into six other key areas. The key insights are as follows:

1. Foundational leadership – this is a period where a person develops character. There are three key areas of character: moral, intellectual and performance character.

2. Emerging leadership – this is a time where a person develops their identity including understanding their strengths, having a firm sense of values and understanding their purpose and their vision. Once

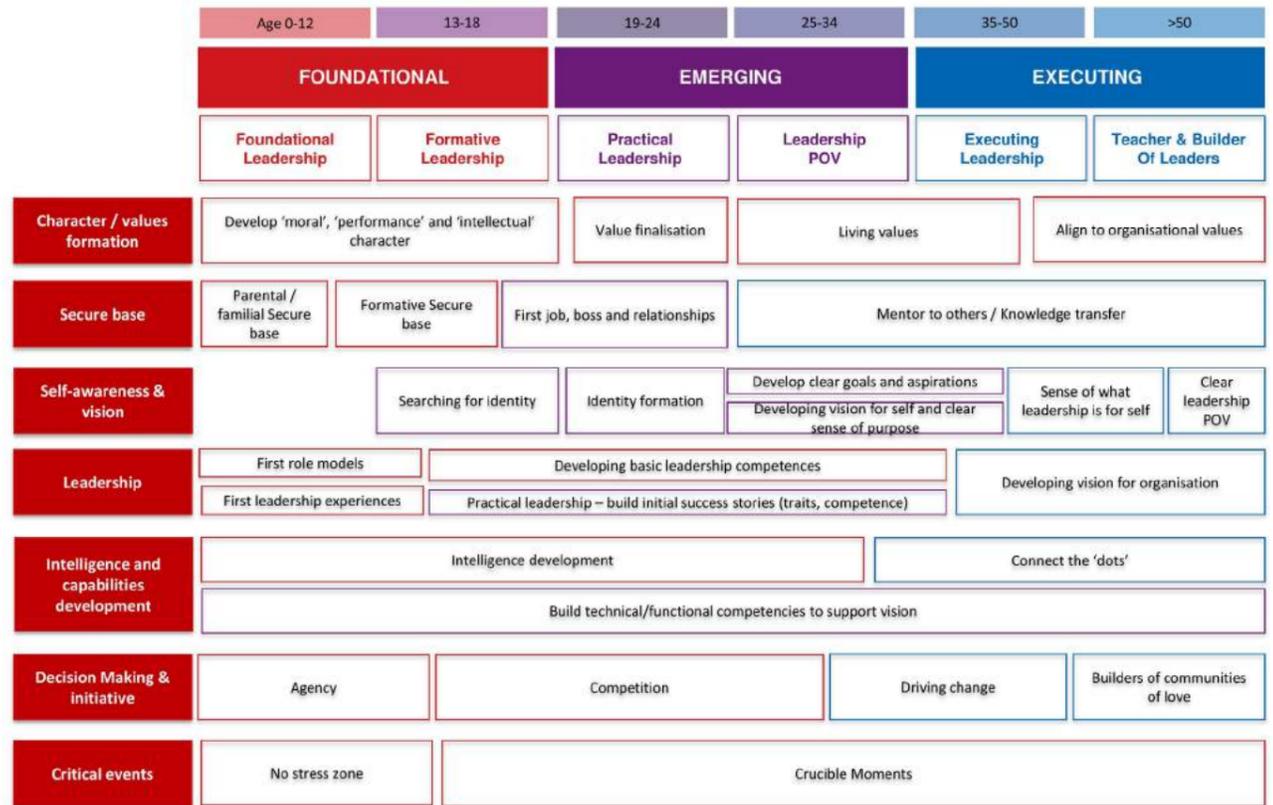


Figure 1 above illustrates in brief some of the stages from character development to identity formation to growth and execution as a leader.

they are clear what these are, they start building competencies that enable them to achieve their personal vision and purpose.

3. Executing leadership – this is a period of growth and execution. Leadership competencies, including decision-making, are enhanced and the individual either makes it or breaks it as a leader. For those who make it, it leads on to a teaching and legacy phase where they 'give back' by sharing their leadership point of view (POV) via mentoring, teaching and knowledge transfer.

Whilst the three stages of leadership development indicate physical age, do note that different individuals develop and receive knowledge and experiences at different times and stages in life.

The age brackets are therefore just a rough guide and should not be taken literally. There are many leaders who may be in their senior years (age-wise) but have yet to develop a clear sense of purpose or identity.

Thus, they are stuck in the emerging stage even though they may well be close to their retirement age. Likewise, if a person has had little character development in their early formative years, it is highly likely a lot of their motivation and leadership competency development will be for personal or self-gratifying reasons.

Whilst going through each of the pieces in this Science of Building Leaders research will require a whole book to cover, I have tried to provide some form of explanation for certain elements in Figure 1 so that you can look at it yourself and ask if you have personally gone through all the different aspects of leadership development.

You can find an explanation of some of the key areas:

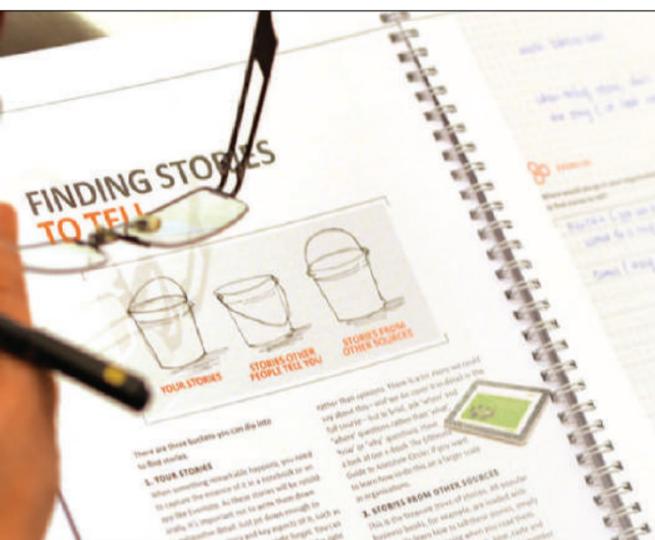
Managing stress and trauma

Early childhood stress and trauma play a significant role in future leadership ability. Scientists have concluded that childhood stress causes damage to developing bodies and brains – and your brains have a huge role to play in your leadership.

Researcher Robert Anda and Vincent Felitti concluded that “the correlations between adverse childhood experiences and negative adult outcomes were so powerful that they stunned us”.

Young children who grow up under severe trauma and stressful environments generally have problems focusing, concentrating, sitting still and even rebounding from disappointments and challenges.

Stress at adolescence too, can be manifested in two ways – either inwardly, where they feel frustrated, angry and fearful and experience self-doubt internally,



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or externally, where it is manifested in shouting, fighting and possibly even breaking the law.

However, there are very few stress-free environments for kids in the world. So what would be a counter to stress? Love. Researcher with rats noticed that baby rats subjected to severe trauma who were licked by their mums after being put back into their cages had their anxiety and fear counteracted, and this calmed them down.

Researchers compared baby rats that were licked and groomed against those that weren't and concluded the following – the loved babies were more social, more curious, had better self-control, were less aggressive and even lived longer.

More interesting was that even when the love was showered by a 'different' mother (a non-biological one), the infants grew up bolder, braver and better adjusted.

High-quality parenting is critical at this starting stage of leadership development as it acts as a buffer for adversity and trauma. That's why a lot of work that we do at Leaderonomics is now centering on providing parental development and not just child development.

However, as we grow up, stress and trauma have a positive effect. In our emerging leadership stage, stress enables us to be pushed to learn faster. We will explore this further during the 'crucible period', where high stress and pain actually help us gain clarity on our vision and values.

Developing moral, intellectual and performance character

In our formative years, our experiences and the people we interact with shape what we consider right and wrong. This essentially shapes our character. I like to believe there are three character dimensions:

Moral character – Moral character is fundamental to be developed early. It represents character traits such as integrity, generosity, sportsmanship, justice and gratitude. Leaders who have not been developed in moral character develop deep self-centeredness and become very inward-looking.

Performance character – This represents your ability to work hard, persevere and not give up. Researchers David Levin and Dominic Randolph outlined a number of performance character strengths critical for leadership success, which are: grit, self-control, zest, optimism and curiosity.

Intellectual character – Intellectual character is comprised of various beliefs we have ordained for ourselves. The mind is a powerful ally or enemy. Carol Dweck, another researcher, believes that our beliefs can make or break us.

One belief she emphasises is how some children believe that who they are is fixed, while others believe they are malleable and flexible. Children who have a 'fixed' mindset essentially grow up thinking they have no control over their lives, while the 'growth' mindset kids work harder to master tough, challenging situations as they have no qualms about being good or bad at a specific skill.

Martin Seligman's book *Learned Optimism* states that the best time to transform pessimistic kids into optimistic ones is "before puberty but late enough in childhood" that they are capable of thinking about thinking (metacognition). At Leaderonomics, we have designed all our youth curriculum to be character-based, embedding all elements of moral, performance and intellectual characters.

As parents and teachers, we need to realise that character can be moulded, taught and changed. Angela Lee Duckworth, a researcher on grit (a type of performance character), believes that: "Habit and character are essentially the same thing. Some kids have good habits and some kids have bad habits. They know that habits might be hard to change, but they are not impossible to change."

As parents, it is important for us to expose our child to a variety of situations, prompting them to reflect and make choices on their own, pointing out consequences, helping them understand alternatives and outcomes. Make a conscious effort to develop all three dimensions of the character component.

Values

Our values guide us as individuals in all the decisions we make in our lives. They start forming at a very young age. They get formed by observing and listening to others. Like character development, value develop-



ment relies much on parents and those around us at a young age, and thus exposure to the right individuals, and/or pointing out the benefits and harms of certain behaviours and attributes would lead to intentional value development.

First leadership experiences

Taking charge of a task and a group of people allows our child to have their first leadership experiences. Whether it is being a classroom monitor, a prefect, or a leader of a school club, these experiences and interactions with higher authority, as well as learning to influence and guide a group of people towards a certain goal, allow youngsters to start building their formative leadership portfolio.

Success in their first leadership role will ignite and spur them forward to take on more challenging roles. At Leaderonomics, we develop these 'first' leadership experiences during our Leaderonomics Club sessions to ensure everyone has an opportunity to grow and be inspired to be a leader.

Intelligence development

Intelligence is different from intellectual character. Whilst character comprises mindsets and beliefs, intelligence stems from developing a love for learning and growing the brain. Reading, observing, listening and exploring build intelligence. This formative intelligence is necessary as a key element of effective leadership is decision-making, which requires heightened levels of intelligence.

First role models encountered

Children imitate people around them or people they look up to. If there are great leadership role models

surrounding them, they are much more likely to aspire and perspire to be great leaders. Again, although this may seem simple, not many of us 'manipulate' our surroundings to ensure great role models surround the leaders we aim to groom.

Secure base

Having someone to run to when things go bad makes a child feel secure about going out and trying many new things. I learnt about the power of secure bases from former hostage negotiator George Kohlrieser.

Secure bases are essential in the foundational years of one's leadership journey as risk-taking and exploration can only be developed in a child when they have a safety net. Children can leave the comforts of their parents or teachers and go out and be challenged but know they can always return to the safe arms of their 'secure-bases'.

'Crucible' moments

Key events in one's life, especially the negative ones, are critical to a leader's growth. Crucible moments can happen at any point of one's life, and they are usually life-changing, altering the trajectory of your life.

Nelson Mandela's imprisonment, the fate of Starbucks founder Howard Schultz's father, and the stories of numerous cancer survivors attest to the impact of crucible moments that hit us hard suddenly in life. Instead of crippling a person – depending on how one's character has developed, and one's values and secure bases – crucible moments can propel a person forward.

Crucible moments are generally rough patches but those that bounce forward (not bounce back) from such situations learn and grow immensely from them. They are also moments where clarity of purpose and vision is established.

There are many other elements which I have not written about at length here, and others on which I have only skimmed the surface. At Leaderonomics, our goal is to be able to support and equip every parent, teacher and counsellor to help every person become a leader.

This article provides a framework but at the end of the day, much hard work and effort are required, not just from the aspiring leader but also from the community around them – from parents, teachers, bosses and current leaders. After all, it does take a village – and more – to build a leader.

Check out bit.ly/SOBLPt2 for further explanation on other key areas of the Science of Building Leaders.



Roshan is the founder and CEO of the Leaderonomics Group. He believes that everyone can be a leader and make a dent in the universe, in their own special ways. Connect with him at roshan.thiran@leaderonomics.com.

Draw the Internet Line, Parents!

Guide children who use social media

By **ELAINE YONG**

editor@leaderonomics.com

In today's reality, having Internet access is as essential as having water and electricity. A global mobile sample and research provider called On Device Research (2014) reported that in Malaysia, the Internet penetration is 66% against a population of 30 million people; with 70% living in urban areas.

The mobile social media penetration in Malaysia (as of October 2014) stood at 50%, when compared with neighbouring countries Singapore (80%), Thailand (46%) and APAC average (22%).

The top three most popular websites visited by Malaysians are: Google.com, Facebook and YouTube. For Facebook, children and young people (aged 13–24) make up nearly half of the users in Malaysia.

With these statistics, one can be certain that a typical 13-year-old Malaysian dwelling in a big city is likely to own a mobile phone with Internet access and is an active Facebooker. This is the reality of the day.

As a parent, how do we fit into this scenario? Do we need to take our parenting online too? Is there a line to be drawn for our children when it comes to social media use?

Before we proceed further, let's have a clear understanding of the concept 'social media'. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary explained it as forms of electronic communication (as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos).

It is a means of interaction among people in which they create, share, and/or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks.

On the other hand, *Whatis.com*, (a search site for knowledge exploration and self-education tool about information technology), defines social media as "the collective of online communications channels dedicated to community-based input, interaction, content-sharing and collaboration".

Bridging the parental divide

Popular social media platforms include blogs, Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Wikipedia, Reddit, Pinterest, YouTube, Vimeo, Flickr, Instagram and LinkedIn. These definitions have one thing in common – they all explain social media as being community-based, and which involves the exchange of information using an online platform.

So, what do parents in other parts of the world do to manage their children's social media use? How do they react?

A quick browse through the literature yields mixed views. For instance, a survey conducted by Children's Mercy Hospitals and Clinics involving 728 American parents found that 83% of parents think the benefits of their children's social media use outweigh or at least balance any perceived risks.

This view seems to be at odds with 40% of parents within this group who worry that their children's online activity could breed social isolation and behavioural problems; and another 40% of parents who are concerned about their children's virtual lives getting in the way of their real-life social skills and friendships.

In the United Kingdom, parents reveal their discomfort with social media. Approximately 63% of 1,006 parents of children aged eight to 16 surveyed online by Opinium, reported following their child's Internet activity at least once a week.

While 21% of these parents were not confident they could install parental controls, 46% admitted not being confident or aware of the school Internet policy.

An interview with 16 American parents with teenage children in Atlanta, Georgia gave detailed insights into their fears of wanting to balance parental authority with teen privacy and independence.

Parents of pre-teens were stricter than parents of older teens in enforcing rules about frequency, time



and place of technology use. However, despite having such rules none of the 16 parents used GPS to track their child's location.

Equal numbers of parents (18%) required their teenagers to befriend them on Facebook and share passwords. The researchers also found that parents acknowledged their awkwardness with technology and some did not understand their children's fascination with chats.

All parents were aware that they could not monitor or control everything their children were doing online.

On the bright side

Despite the negativity, is social media all that bad? There must be something good about it otherwise children will not gravitate towards it.

Many children have more positive than negative perceptions towards social media. Some benefits noted are:

- another outlet to express themselves
- builds confidence
- reaffirms their extroverted personality trait
- strengthens friendships
- opportunities to collaborate with others
- encourages self-censorship
- sources of information
- encourages multitasking

In essence, if you have a child or teenager today, we as parents, have to jump on board the ship; otherwise the ship will sail without us. Just like the times when our parents used to nag us about television watching, with many saying it's a waste of time – we certainly never thought so.

Parenting tips for social media

1 Adopt an authoritative parenting style

- Set rules and limits for acceptable technology use and behaviour
- Allow children to talk and negotiate on these rules
- Outline clear consequences for rule-breaking

Authoritative parenting is a classic parenting concept in developmental psychology which came about from Diana Baumrind's research. This parenting style recognises the child's interest.

Baumrind states that authoritative parents attempt to direct the child's activities in a rational, issue-oriented manner and all the while greatly valuing the child's autonomous self-will and conformity to rules.

For instance, in my household, mobile phones are not to be used at the dining table, especially when the meal is served. Any violations will see the phone confiscated immediately.

2 Get educated about technology

- Keep up with technology trends

In 2014, Ello was a new social platform intended to go head-to-head with social media giant, Facebook. It was created as an ad-free alternative to existing social media platforms and has now shifted towards a Pinterest-like website to showcase art.

3 Educate children on how to keep their online footprints clean

- Not to leave any identifiable details such as phone number, address, and identity card number

Similar to meeting strangers face-to-face, our children are warned against speaking to people unknown to them. In the social media world, there might be child predators wanting personal information to locate and befriend them.

4 Remind children it's a World Wide Web

- Information is permanent and public
- Be prepared for differences in opinions and instigations for arguments

Unlike verbal communication, whereby a person might eventually forget, pictures and comments posted online are permanent and can come back to haunt them for years to come.

5 Do not be the cyberbully

- Never shame your child on social media; it will backfire on you!

- Never write sexist or racist remarks about your child's teachers or friends on their social media platforms

Some parents may think that they are teaching their teenagers a lesson by leaving a compromising picture on their Facebook page. One father even took to YouTube to reprimand his teenage daughter and was heavily criticised by netizens.

6 Keep reality and online separate

- Refrain from taking your arguments online

- Settle disagreements within the same day in a face-to-face discussion

If a reprimand is in order, try this. Have a private closed-door discussion about your disagreement with your child. Keep your emotions in check and voice even.

Be objective and clear about why you are feeling upset or displeased. After hearing out the reasons, forgive and forget. As parents, we should choose our battles wisely.

7 Have offline family days

- Have a family contract to not access the Internet for a day!

I personally know of a family who 'disconnects' every Sunday. If you can't do that, at least try to turn off all devices for half a day.

Try playing a board game as a family and the losers can cook dinner!

■ This article was previously published in print.



Elaine Yong is a lecturer and developmental psychologist with Sunway University. She is a mother of two and lectures in the area of Developmental and Educational Psychology. Besides lecturing, she enjoys giving talks on parenting to assist new parents with parenthood. To connect with Elaine, email us at editor@leaderonomics.com.

By **VICTOR LOH**
 editor@leaderonomics.com

A number of years ago, Clarissa was a 'high-potential' gunning for a directorial level position in her company. Then she did the unexpected; she had two children in succession.

"I was always highly ambitious. Even after my son was born and we were struggling to cope with two kids, I still had my heart set on that promotion. But as the kids got older, it became clear I couldn't be both a star at work and at home too," she sighs.

So, she traded boardroom wheeling and dealing for parent-teacher association meetings and committees. "I don't regret putting my kids first but I can't say that I don't miss having a career... I look at women who have it all and I feel a twinge of envy. How do they do it?"

They don't!

Studies conducted in the United States (US) have found that the majority of working parents are walking time bombs, health-wise. They suffer from – among others – panic attacks, depression, anxiety, burn-outs, heart palpitations, migraines, nagging coughs, sleep deprivation and hives.

According to a survey of working parents, 88 per cent of the participants suffer from a stress-related health problem; 59 per cent have anxiety issues; and 43 per cent struggle with depression.

It is a global problem even if the statistics available are States-wide. When I conduct workshops about parenting with emotional intelligence (EQ), the most common struggle parents say they face is lack of time, which then leads to stress both at work and at home. Many – and this includes fathers too – feel they are barely managing.

And how are the kids coping? Well, the fact that Oprah created a show called *Kidnapped by the Kids* where kids confront their work-obsessed parents, hints that all is not good on the home front.

It is a painful irony. Children feel neglected because parents spend so much time and focus (remember it's not always about physical time; you can be at home but mentally and emotionally at the office!) on their jobs.

Parents in turn, believe they have to work hard for the children and family. It is a never-ending cycle that destabilises the family and makes every member feel helpless and hopeless.

If you're looking for scientific proof, here's one from Malta. A research study titled *Experiencing Childhood in Malta* by Discern, the Institute for

The Wish List

Helping working parents be more productive at work

Research on the Signs of the Times, found non-typical work schedules and parenting proxy negatively affecting children.

The study reported that instead of parents and children having lifestyles that complemented each other, children had to completely adapt to their working parents' way of life.

As a working parent, I can sympathise. My wife and I are fortunate to be self-employed so we have the flexibility to dictate our working hours somewhat. But even that doesn't spare us from the challenges faced by working parents! We often work late into the night because we want to accommodate the children's bed-times.

I believe in situations where children are exempted from negative consequences, it is because one or both parents are making huge sacrifices, like giving up their careers or intentionally arranging their schedule around their family needs – which in turn leads to the kind of stress we talked about earlier. Not surprisingly, mothers eventually decide they have to choose between their careers and children – like Clarissa.

Companies cannot afford to lose too many of their employees. Neither can they brush off the struggles working parents face because the effects cascade from the home to the workplace, affecting productivity, quality of work, work environment, staff dynamics, and so on.

Research repeatedly confirms that when things are going well in their personal life, employees perform much better at work – and vice versa.

So what would help these distressed working parents?

Flexible working hours, work-from-home arrangements, on-site crèche, part-time options, time-off and extended maternity leave are among the common things that make the wish list.

"I think if I was allowed to telecommute, I would have continued working," says Clarissa. "I would have been happy to settle for a less high-profile role and bide my time until the kids are older. At least I would still be in the workforce."

But in Malaysia, expecting these options would be a tall order. Although much has been said about making it easier for mothers to rejoin the workforce, most companies still do not offer alternative employment choices.

"My company allows fathers to opt for flexi-scheduling but the job itself doesn't seem to support this. Plus there is a lot of social pressure and fear that it would affect career advancement. I mean, would you promote someone on flexi-scheduling to a senior sales manager?" shares a father of three boys whom I met at a parenting workshop.

And even when these options are available, the working parents' dilemma does not necessarily get resolved. A study conducted in the US found that even with one or more of these perks, parents still feel stretched.

Are companies caught in a 'damned if we do and damned if we don't' conundrum then? I believe we have to move towards more liberal and flexible working options that will encourage greater work-life balance – not just for parents but all employees. It is a global phenomenon.

But the reality is we are a long way off from achieving this. To be fair, it is not just costly for companies to do so but also requires a massive rethinking about the way people work and corporations operate. These things take time.

So while companies are not yet able to fulfil the working parent's wish list, they need to sincerely demonstrate through other means that they care. Parenting workshops and family enrichment programmes go a much longer way with this group than departmental dinners, sports club and off-site team building activities that take them away from their family.

Be a partner to your employees at home if you want them to be partners in your business.



Victor Loh is a passionate advocate for life skills education for youth and children. He is also a best-selling author, award-winning marketer, corporate trainer and entrepreneur. Get in touch with him at editor@leaderonomics.com.

By **JOSEPH TAN**
editor@leaderonomics.com

All things are created twice. – Stephen R. Covey

EVERY leader is supposed to have a vision of where the organisation should go but what if the going gets tough? Does the toughness of reality invalidate the vision?

On the contrary, the present challenges accentuate the seriousness of your vision and reveal the depth of your leadership commitment. It's no great surprise that visioning is one of the key demands of executive leadership.

Successful leaders are able to look at, across, and beyond the organisation, even beyond the clear and present dangers to the clear and future rewards for those they lead.

The simple fact is this – the future is worth visioning because this is where we will eventually live. The creation of tomorrow must begin today.

Although Walt Disney died in 1966, five years before the opening of Disney World, it was reported that the vision of the project was so vivid in his mind that when he described the future, he spoke as if he had already been there!

It was his clear depiction of the future that gave life to the project and rallied the entire design and construction team together even before the first brick was laid.

Leaders like Disney have a talent for seeing the future and making it happen. They use highly visual language that paints pictures of the future for their followers. As a result, they seem to attain bigger goals because they create a collective mindset that propels people to help them make their vision a reality.

The best leaders talk often about the future and how it will be better than the present. Their forward-looking approach engages and excites their audience and elicits commitment.

There are five steps to consider to engage your audience with your 'visioning enthusiasm':

1 **Articulate consistently**

The message of the leader is not about novelty, rather it is about consistency. If a leader articulates a different message or vision every time he or she speaks, then it is difficult for employees to follow because a shifting vision inevitably leads to unstable priorities.

Eventually, this results in unclear and even conflicting expectations. When you talk about the future, can your team members expect the same story or does the plot change with your mood of the day?

2 **Establish long-term partnerships**

The strength of your vision is dependent on the strength of your relationship with people whom you trust, with team members who share the same worldview and perspective. The saying is true – if you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.

“Other people's perception of reality, whether you agree with them or not, always add important nuances to your own perception.”

3 **Communicate as a team**

The future can be envisioned by one person. However, it takes a team to translate that vision into reality. Hence, even though your message may be consistent but if you are singing the vision as a soloist, chances are you may run out of breath eventually.

The metaphor then is one of conducting an orchestra rather than belting out the tunes entirely on your own breath.

This principle is even more needful when an organisation goes through challenging times because unity in the team provides the thrust required for the realisation of the dream. Communicate your dream as a team, not as an individual.



Without an intentional effort to forge long-term partnerships, the pang of loneliness can often set in and dilute the leader's moral courage to carry on the fight. Most successful organisations are usually founded by two people with complementary talents – this is the power of two at work.

Do you have this power of leadership at work personally for yourself?

Without an intentional effort to forge long-term partnerships, the pang of loneliness can often set in and dilute the leader's moral courage to carry on the fight. Most successful organisations are usually founded by two people with complementary talents – this is the power of two at work.

Do you have this power of leadership at work personally for yourself?

4 **Be open to feedback**

You can gain great insight from frequent, regular, and ongoing feedback from other people. Although it can cause a great deal of discomfort, honest input helps create an accurate picture of reality and provide opportunities for adjustments so that elements of impracticality can be weeded out.

Since no one individual can mandate a perfectly accurate description of reality, you must draw from other people's perceptions to imbue your reality with the deepest possible understanding of its many hues and shades.

Remember, other people's perception of reality, whether you agree with them or not, always add important nuances to your own perception.

5 **Be the vision yourself**

Nothing communicates a vision of the future more effectively than someone who walks the talk and demonstrates the attitude and behaviour of what it takes to get there.

Crafting the vision is the easy part, communicating the compelling case for the vision requires that a leader summon the moral courage to present the story for why the vision should be fulfilled in the first place.

It is one thing to craft a vision but quite another to cast it. With the rising aspiration of the younger and talented workforce, employees are now looking for more meaning in their contribution and their loyalty is determined by the integrity of the company's vision and mission.

In other words, employees need to put a face to the vision. Without that personal association between the message and the messenger, the vision remains a legalistic reminder, not a motivated energiser.

The seeing comes before the behaving

Emotions drive attention. Visioning taps on to the hidden potential within the human spirit to rise up above the mundane of daily grind.

Adding vision brings meaning and purpose to any activity – the danger to successful leadership is not busyness, rather, it is a sense of mindless and routine activities which do not add up to a motivating future.

To be busy is not the same as being purposeful. Purpose needs vision and vision can only be birthed by leaders who see beyond – beyond the issues and even beyond themselves.

■ *This article was previously published in print.*

Joseph's passion is to work with performance-focused leaders to capture the hearts and minds of their employees through a strengths-based and accountability-driven approach. Much of what is shared in the article comes from his experience in working with clients to transform their organisation's culture. Get in touch with him at editor@leaderonomics.com.

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The Art of Self-Awareness

Here's how it ties in with vision and leadership

By **CAROLYNE NJOGU**
editor@leaderonomics.com

CREATING a unifying vision is critical to furthering any initiative or championing any cause. Your ability to rally others around a common goal depends largely on whether your vision is simple, audacious, compelling and inspirational enough.

Most leaders are thought to be visionaries because they seem to have the uncanny ability to unite others behind their vision. What makes these individuals adept in their leadership is not charm – although some do have it – but rather, their self-awareness.

Effective leaders are well-attuned to who they are. They are in touch with their strengths and weaknesses, and have mastered the art of knowing when to be what and to whom. Self-awareness is fundamental to influence, and visionary leaders are great at seeing themselves as those they lead see them.

What is self-awareness?

Dr Travis Bradberry, the author of *Emotional Intelligence 2.0*, describes self-awareness as “one of the core components of emotional intelligence”. He defines emotional intelligence as “your ability to recognise and understand emotions in yourself and others, and your ability to use this awareness to manage your behaviour and relationships”. Fundamentally, self-awareness is self-discovery.

Developing self-awareness is critical to effective leadership because it sets the foundation upon which all other leadership competencies are built. To lead effectively, one needs to demonstrate self-control, empathy, good judgment, teamwork and trust – these are all impossible to embody unless one has done the inner work, i.e. cultivating self-awareness.

Arguably, self-awareness and vision are not mutually exclusive. One must have clarity of what one wants to create or the initiative they want to bring to bear first, before sharing that vision with their stakeholders for buy-in. Only then can they manifest their new realities.

This may sound easy but self-awareness at every level of visionary thinking, communication, sharing, and broadcasting is vital. One needs to be audacious enough to take on the self-discovery journey inwardly first.

Society now lives in the world of the Internet and social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and the like. Amid all these distractions, how can one attain self-awareness?

1 Self-discovery

Curiosity is where it all starts.

Start by asking yourself interrogative questions, for example:

- How do I show up every day?
- What do I want to be remembered for?
- Who do I want to become?
- Do I blame or judge others?
- Is there a better perspective than my own out there?
- Why do I feel insecure with this person or when undertaking this task?

*Curiosity killed the cat,
but knowledge brought it back.*

By being interested in yourself and seeking to understand your own experiences, behaviours and motives, you reveal your true self, and it offers you a window to see yourself in other humans too, thus cultivating empathy and trust.

A leadership expert once remarked, “Great leaders demonstrate concern for others, that they have good judgment, that they can be trusted. People follow leaders whom they believe in. This is where the much-touted ‘authenticity’ fits in.”



2 Self-reflection

Now that you know how you show up, how can you monitor your behaviour to best adjust and advance your vision?

Self-reflection is the art of examining your thoughts, attitudes and behaviours in solitude. This allows you to unravel who you truly are and gives you the opportunity to edit behaviour that is self-limiting. Activities such as meditation and journaling are very helpful to encourage reflection.

In the classic *Harvard Business Review* article, *Managing Oneself*, Peter Drucker wrote: “Whenever you make a decision or take a key decision, write down what you expect will happen. Nine or 12 months later, compare the results with what you expected.”

This type of exercise allows you to understand your inner motives and your prowess in decision-making – or lack thereof. This crucial information allows you to tweak yourself to be more aligned with your vision.

3 Self-awareness

Self-awareness is inevitable if you are open to self-discovery and self-reflection. While this journey may seem like common sense, it's extremely challenging to master because we humans don't always commit to facing the truth about our shortcomings.

Nevertheless, for those committed to their self-discovery, they invariably adhere to the ‘trinity of self-awareness’: know thyself, improve thyself, and complement thyself.

Cultivating self-awareness

The more self-aware you are, the more of an authentic and efficient leader you become. To cultivate a keen sense of self-awareness, you can add a few techniques to your repertoire of skills in self-discovery and self-reflection to get to where you want to be.

Evidently, being willing to ask yourself the hard questions is a necessary step; however, to improve you will need to seek candour from others around you, because the ego in human nature tends to either magnify or minimise how we see ourselves.

Here are some ways you can gather more data about yourself:

- **Feedback:** Ask your close friends and family to describe how you show up, and ask those you serve or work with what draws them to work with you (360-degree feedback)
- **Take self-assessment tests:** Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), Kolbe Index, Enneagram, DISC, StrengthsFinder, and StandOut are a few examples of personality assessments that will help you understand yourself better
- **Vision, values and priorities:** Design and plan your life or what you want to create

The purpose here is to help you embrace the totality of who you are – to ‘know thyself’ and ‘own your power’.

Benefits of being self-aware

The benefits of self-awareness are vast. It enriches the whole person, irrespective of who you are. Even the Greek philosophers understood this and believed that ‘know thyself’ was the highest form of knowledge.

Benefits of self-awareness and vision include:

- Knowing your strengths and weaknesses and how they impact your performance
- Knowing what situations and environments (culture) complement your nature
- Boosting your emotional and social intelligence (EQ and SQ)
- Improved decision-making and critical thinking skills
- Better communication and relationship skills
- Enhanced leadership abilities and capacity
- Improved focus on things that matter

Self-awareness also improves a person's character – as working towards a vision is a lifetime endeavour, your values guide you daily to the envisioned future while keeping you in check and with the conviction to stay focused.

Self-awareness and visionaries in history

Today, we regard a few historical leaders as great visionaries, but these leaders were flawed just as we are. Winston Churchill was one such leader.

He embodied courage and resilience, and openly embraced his weaknesses. It is recorded that he spent a lot of time alone and endured rejection due to his bluntness. History also records that despite his shortcomings, Churchill always put the country before himself and had a vision, a big heart and a great sense of care.

Human beings are complex and diverse, and self-awareness is critical if you expect to lead and influence others effectively. Seeing yourself as you are and as others see you humbles and empowers you at the same time. This mirror effect is what enables us to form psychological bonds and connections with others.

Leaders should cultivate emotional and social intelligence in form of self-awareness to empower themselves to lead from a place of humility, and realise that more than leading, their role is to be in the service of those who follow them.



Carolyn is the founding principal at VPF Strategies and helps professionals and organisations gain clarity around building better brands for better results. She is a speaker, the author of Being Grounded: 21 Days To Come Alive and Love Your Life, and a contributing writer for various publications. To connect with her, email editor@leaderonomics.com.

Your First Business Card

Good manners and etiquette matter

By **DARSHANA SIVANANTHAM**
editor@leaderonomics.com

FIRST impressions matter. We are raised in a society that places high regard on good manners and values. It doesn't come as a surprise that most of us were taught to say our please and thank yous early in life. In fact, it is very much an integral part of Malaysian culture.

Read on to see how a little bit of good manners can take you a long way!

Social grace, etiquette and protocol

Social grace is simply how we interact in social situations. These include the spectrum of etiquette, manners, dressing and refinement. In earlier times, these were required skills taught to young women in finishing school.

Etiquette and protocol are a customary code of polite behaviour in society. It's a guide for good behaviour, politeness and commendable manners. Etiquette constantly changes to suit society as it evolves; protocol, however, rarely does.

As we probably encounter more occasions where there is a need to practise good etiquette, here's a set of simple etiquette tips for everyday engagements.

Introducing people

Yes, there is an art to introducing people! The right way to introduce someone is to first state the name of the person, followed by a formal introduction to another.

For example, "Dave, I would like to introduce you to Ken." Other phrases you can use include "please meet" or "this is".

A proper introduction is only complete when you also offer some details about each person. If you have some knowledge of common interests that they may share, this will help them to connect and subsequently carry the conversation.

Mobile etiquette

We've all encountered that one inconsiderate person chatting away on the mobile phone while in the cinema or in important meetings. Mobile etiquette is probably one of the most important aspects of this spectrum, given that almost everyone owns a mobile device.

Some simple pointers to remember are:

- Learn to use features such as the silent and vibrate mode when in meetings or in social engagements
- Ensure ringtone volume is low or turned off in public spaces (theatres, places of worship, restaurants and others), speaking softly and considerately, and using appropriate language
- Keep the phone away/turned off when engaged in a conversation
- Avoid talking about personal and confidential issues in public

Dress code

This is a rather tricky one. Typically, there are a few general categories of dress code that we follow – black tie/formal, white tie, cocktail, smart casual and casual.

Black tie events call for formal attire. Men are expected to wear dark suits or tuxedos, while women should be dressed in elegant gowns or dresses over knee length. Hair must be styled, worn up or down. In some countries, traditional and ethnic attire is also acceptable as formal/black tie attire.

White tie events are more formal than black tie events. Dress code for these events require men to be in full formal attire (white tie, vest and shirt). Women



must wear their hair up, and be dressed in elegant gowns. Some common white tie events include charity and society balls.

A more familiar dress code is the cocktail – which usually refers to semi-formal short/long elegant dresses for women, and dark suits for men.

Smart casual is one we hear often, being a common dress code at the office. The general rule of thumb for smart casual requires at least a smart jacket and closed shoes. It is also acceptable for women to wear pants with this dress code. Although denim (and jeans) are not considered smart casual, in some cultures, it is perfectly acceptable to pair this with a smart jacket.

And finally, the dress code we all love – casual! Here's where we wear our jeans, summer dresses and skirts. However, even the casual dress code

has some rules. We may assume that flip-flops or slippers are suitable to wear with this dress code, but it's actually inappropriate in some settings.

Dining

There's a whole list of dos and don'ts when it comes to dining. To get started, it is always important to remember that burping, slurping, talking with your mouth full, and hands/elbows on the table are considered bad table manners. It's also important to remember that when dining, it isn't only about the food; it's also about the company. When seated at a table with other guests, always remember to politely engage others in conversation.

There's also a whole list of cutlery that needs some remembering when in a formal dining setting. We're

not going to go into details here, but rest assured that there's ample information available online on how to use forks, spoons and knives the right way. The key is to always remember that like everything else in life, even this can be learnt!

After every dining experience, do take the time to send over a personal thank you note to your host.

Carrying conversations

While starting conversations can be easy for some, sustaining them can prove to be difficult. Some key pointers to keep in mind when carrying conversations include:

- Talk less, and listen more
- Be prepared with topics to discuss
- Tailor conversations to suit your listeners
- Avoid sensitive topics such as politics and religion

If all else fails – just smile!

All of the above serve as a guide to practising good etiquette in various situations that arise in our lives. Having the knowledge of good etiquette and practising it helps us in many ways, and reflects highly on the way we carry ourselves as individuals interacting in a society that places high value on good practices and manners.

If all else fails – then just use the most important curve on your body – your smile! A genuine, warm smile makes up for anything, if it comes from the right place.

■ This article was previously published in print.



Darshana is the communications manager at WWF-Malaysia. A former PR consultant, photographer, and associate trainer, her career path has been anything but monotonous. To connect with her, email us at editor@leaderonomics.com.

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Etiquette and protocol are a customary code of polite behaviour in society. It's a guide for good behaviour, politeness and commendable manners.

Green-Eyed Monster

You're not following your own path when you're busy trying to be someone else

By **ALVIN DAN WERN KHANG**
editor@leaderonomics.com

He wakes and takes a deep breath, looks at his phone and gives a sigh. New morning, just like any other, he says. He starts imagining how life would be if he were richer like someone else.

They probably have breakfast prepared for them in bed, while he only has dry cereal stashed in the cupboard. He thinks about the work he has to accomplish today, already dreading the morning traffic he will be fighting later.

"Woe is me," he proclaims – if only life was easier, if only the grass was greener here in this part of the world. "If only I was born somewhere else, a different city, a different family, a different name."

Life would be so different, so much more meaningful, with so much more purpose. And in that instant, he turns and realises that in the mirror looking straight back at him, was a pair of green eyes.

He knew at that moment, the green-eyed monster was no one else but him.



I don't know about you, but on some days, I wake up with a negative cycle of thoughts running through my head.

The worst part of it is, sometimes I can go about my day carrying envy and then forget to 'look into the mirror', which basically means not making time to reflect or to dig deep into my thoughts and feelings.

Envy – as defined by Merriam-Webster – is the feeling a person has when he/she is resentful of an advantage enjoyed by another, joined with a desire to possess the same advantage.

A clear sign of envy can arise when there is dissatisfaction of one's life, a clear comparison mindset to others, or an issue of self-pride. As you can already see, the factors that cause feelings of envy are highly external, but the source of the issue is very much internal.

The cost of envy

You would probably be asking, is envy really that bad? Can it be used instead as a driver towards having greater success if the envy is because of someone who is better than you?

While a part of that may be true, envy does give a person a negative sense of life, and makes people forget at what cost it will take to attain the success they seek.

From a counselling point of view, the dissatisfaction that envy creates often brings depression instead of a positive drive towards a goal. Comparing your own life to another has a detrimental effect. When those affected by envy feel their lives are worthless, they focus on wanting to live another person's life instead.

According to an article written in *The Origin of Emotions*, envy becomes strongest when someone you personally know has achieved a higher position in life than you. It is specifically mentioned that envy varies with peer similarity, which states that the more similar the circumstances in life, the stronger the negative effect.

The thought pattern to this is that the person feeling envy will consider the fact that if they both had significant similarities throughout their lives, but the other individual has achieved a higher status, then the person would assume that he/she needs to be of equal status with the targeted individual.

As I would always say to others about comparing, there is no need to compare an apple and an orange – if you like both, eat them. If you like one, eat that. If you like neither, get yourself another fruit.

The fact is that no matter how similar the circumstances in life between two people, even if they were

siblings who grew up in the same home, there would still be many other factors in the process of growing up that would make one distinct from the other.

Take control of the monster

Now that we've gone quite deep into what envy is and how to be aware of it, which would conclude the whole act of 'looking into the mirror' that I alluded to in the beginning, let's look at two key steps to deal with envy.

1 Comparing your expectations

The best person to compare to is yourself. The simple act of looking back on our own lives and considering the blessings, friends and experiences that we have gone through will indicate to us the measure of our growth.

Of course, this also means that on some days we may feel defeated because we may sense that we have failed, especially when we compare ourselves to our past projections. We will fall some days, but learning to get up is a growth journey too.

2 Check your values

It is always important to figure out what we value the most. Many times when envy happens, it's usually because we want a bigger house, a

bigger car or a more comfortable life.

The problem is that many people know the destination, but in their haste to get there they forget to hold on to their values – so they go all out in trying to achieve their goals, and usually find out that they have sacrificed too much of themselves along the way.

It's a good reminder to find out what value to place on the goals that you would like to achieve. You could have a personal goal that affects only you, or a goal that is larger than yourself which may aid others in achieving their goals too.

In conclusion

I believe that if envy is dealt with in the right manner it can be beneficial. While envy in itself drives a person away from others due to dissatisfaction, a person who knows how to deal with envy in a healthy manner can then learn to connect with the object of his/her attention.

Why burn bridges when we can build them and use that to further develop our own lives. As they say... don't hate, appreciate.

 Alvin Dan's personal passion lies in community and personal development and he believes that the community at large can do its share to make this world a better place. He plans to continue developing his expertise in counselling in order to assist and empower youths and families. To engage with Alvin, email editor@leaderonomics.com.

We will fall some days, but learning to get up is a growth journey too.

There is no need to compare an apple and an orange – if you like both, eat them. If you like one, eat that. If you like neither, get yourself another fruit.

By **KARA ATKINSON**
editor@leaderonomics.com

WE all know that feeling of dread: 'I need a warm body in the seat so I can deliver the numbers.'

When someone leaves your organisation, the instinctive reaction is to head straight back out to market with a once-coveted – but now outdated – job description based entirely on the previous appointee. It's easy to fall into the trap of posting multiple ads and briefing multiple recruiters, hoping to cover all bases and plug the gaps quickly.

The result? According to a study by Leadership IQ, one out of two hires is a mis-hire, with 46 per cent of newly-hired employees said to fail within 18 months, and only 19 per cent set to achieve unequivocal success.

In addition, *Harvard Business Review* puts the failure rate among management hires at 60 per cent. Deloitte says the consequences of this failure can cost the organisation tens of thousands of dollars, or up to twice the original person's salary. (Ouch.)

In the meantime, your remaining team are left to pick up the slack. They usually feel hurt and angry at being left out of consultations that will directly impact them. This creates slumps in revenue and dramatic spikes in sick days taken.

This current way of working is not, well, working for anyone: current teams, candidates, CEOs or recruiters. Hiring to replace a person quickly, rather than taking the time to figure out your organisation's needs and filling that required role, just sets up everyone in the process for failure.

The need is *not* for speed

This is why it is imperative that you spend time understanding your business **before** advertising in the market. Once you have figured out and articulated where the real need of your business lies, then you can design an irresistible invitation that attracts only

Why It's Time to Get Rid of **Seat-Warmers**

the best candidates in the market that fill that need.

In this scenario, your line manager maximises his or her time in each interview with highly engaged candidates who are genuinely open to a move. They are not looking elsewhere; they are looking solely at you. Any potential candidate feels courted, not hunted. They are more open to the opportunities with which you present them.

It's about building quality and relationships, not reacting to quantity and speed.

So to do this, to understand the gaps in your organisation, you need to create a standard recruiting system and process that you will follow – a scorecard – that you will use for each and every candidate.

Score to secure

A scorecard is not a job description, nor a laundry list of requirements. It is a standard grading system used to measure each candidate. You score from 1 to 10 across two categories: role fit and company fit.

To determine the attributes and behaviours you are looking for and what to score against, first you think about the future of the role you are seeking to fill. What would need to be accomplished in order for the hiring manager to enthusiastically re-hire the same person?

Next, write down your benchmarks of success. For example: launching five new products, closing USD1.5mil of new business, putting the company back in the black, or turning around the entire division. This helps to define five to seven day-to-day accountabilities. What will this person actually be doing every day to deliver that degree of success?

After that you can identify the competencies or characteristics required to execute those accountabilities. If one accountability, for instance, is to turn around an unprofitable product line, then the ability to ask insightful questions and prioritise problems for resolution might be necessary.

Finally, you can determine the candidate's DNA. This means looking for attributes that are hardwired, and rarely change over time. Hiring for 'cultural fit' is a big mistake. It's not a tangible goal, and there's no science or reliable data behind it.

Once you have your own unique scorecard in place, you can craft a job invitation that is so compelling, your reader (i.e. your candidate) is so excited at the thought of working for you they dismiss any other opportunities they are presented with.

This is what happens when you banish the 'bums-on-seats' mentality and instead, consider: What do the seats look like in your organisation?



Kara Atkinson is an expert in recruitment and founder of SPARC – The Sales Leader Network. With over 18 years in the industry, Kara created her own recruitment business 10 years ago, fuelled by the opportunity to help people continue to build and transform themselves through their career. Kara specialises in sales & marketing executive roles, recruiting across all industries and business sizes. To connect with Kara, email us at editor@leaderonomics.com.



Grow. Build. Transform.

"If we helped grow one person into a leader, he or she would then be able to transform their community and if we kept repeating this over and over, nations will be transformed. And thus the vision of Leaderonomics began."

- Roshan Thiran, Group CEO and Founder of Leaderonomics