

EDITED BY ROSHAN THIRAN

# Leadership<sup>🎲</sup> Nuggets

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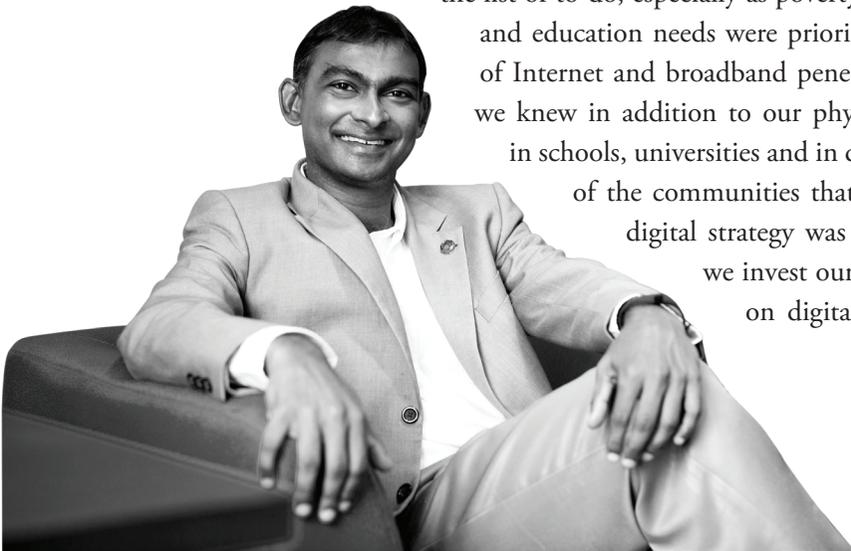
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# Editor's Note

Almost 8 years ago, a group of brave women and men decided to leave their lives as they knew it and join me in this journey called Leaderonomics to see if we can democratise leadership and make it accessible to everyone, including the poor and the under-privileged especially in the developing countries in Asia and across the world. We decided to start with Malaysia—the ‘Third World’ country that most of us were most familiar with—to prototype this “idea” and see if we can, in our small, crazy way to “transform the nation.” This dream has taken on the form of one of the largest social enterprises and is now making significant headway in driving the leadership development agenda not just in Malaysia but also in Thailand, Cambodia and even in Papua New Guinea.

As part of our dream to make leadership development accessible to everyone, we knew early on that reach was critical. We knew that the fastest way to reach the most remote parts of the world was through the numerous digital breakthroughs. Yet, in many developing countries, driving the digital agenda was not primary on the list of to-do, especially as poverty eradication and education needs were prioritised instead of Internet and broadband penetration. But, we knew in addition to our physical set-ups in schools, universities and in different part of the communities that we serve, a digital strategy was key. But do we invest our small funds on digital innovation



or continue to invest in projects that directly touch and impact lives on a day-to-day basis?

Within the first few years, we focused primarily on the people we met, touched, saw and directly interacted with. But we knew that in order to really democratise leadership, we needed a digital footprint and we needed to be able to bring leadership content to the masses. We have a unique “science of building leaders” philosophy where we believe that leadership begins early in life. We believe that at each part of a child, adolescent and later, adult’s life, there has to be experiences and situations that will mould a person into a leader. Each piece is critical for the building of great leaders. And from character formation in a child’s life (both moral character and performance character) to value formation in an adolescent’s life to the development of a personal vision in a young adult’s life to the development of a leadership point of view after experiencing various crucibles in an adult’s life, each is a milestone that needs to be passed on and experienced.

Yet, knowledge of these milestones and experiences that need to be gathered is constantly the issue faced by young people who want to improve themselves and better their personal leadership. So, in the past two years, our team have worked hard to gather and curate (and create) the best leadership content from all around the world into one website—[www.leaderonomics.com](http://www.leaderonomics.com).

And so, we gathered top leadership experts like Jack Welch, who redefined organisational leadership in the 1990s, leadership guru John Maxwell, world-famous author Simon Sinek, top leadership neurologist Terry Small, as well as other top Asian authorities on leadership. I, myself, started doing significant research on different aspects of leadership and, with my team, started to develop content on leadership geared towards the Asian market too. Everything was gathered and available for free on [www.leaderonomics.com](http://www.leaderonomics.com).

This availability of curated, researched and timeless leadership content was broken up into four categories which we believe great leaders have to have master, i.e. Personal Mastery, Leadership Mastery, Functional Mastery and Business Mastery. For the past two years, our dedicated content team works weekly to get the best leadership content and experts together to bring this to corporate leaders, students, young adults and kids so that everyone can learn to become great leaders.

One of my standard yearly rituals is to reflect at the end of the year. As I reflected on the entire year of 2015, a number of articles from [www.leaderonomics.com](http://www.leaderonomics.com) stood out as the best of the best. There were more than 2,000+ articles created, curated, edited and compiled from all around the world in 2015. Of these 2,000+ articles, the following 25 were not only popular and widely shared, but also had some deep insight and profound wisdom. I wrote about 50 articles in 2015 for [www.leaderonomics.com](http://www.leaderonomics.com). So, I took the liberty to pick five of my own favourites which are highlighted in the first section of the book. The other 20 articles have been selected not only by me, but with the help of our amazing editors—Ian Lee, Nina Ti, Lim Lay Hsuan, Prema Jayabalan, Prethiba Esvary, Michelle Boon, Tamara Jayne and Darshana Sivanantham. This team not only worked tirelessly each week to find and research the best leadership material in the stratosphere, but also curate, create new content and ensure that we maximise our readers' learning and development.

The team is also supported by our content development team led by Evangelia Christodoulou from Cyprus, Lim Kwan-Lyn from New Zealand and Sheera Hussin and a host of other content experts from across the globe. We also have an amazing team that works closely with our corporate customers in Malaysia, Singapore, Papua New Guinea, Cambodia, Thailand, India, Japan, China, and various European countries, to gather insightful research and case studies to make our content rich and relevant.

We hope this book will inspire you to want to continue to grow and better yourself daily to become a great leader who will help shape and change this nation. We pray these articles will not only be a reminder to constantly push yourself but also to enable you to lead better and make a difference in the lives of people you lead. Enjoy this little compilation from us and we wish you all the best in your leadership journey ahead! May 2016 bring you joy, love, peace and leadership greatness!

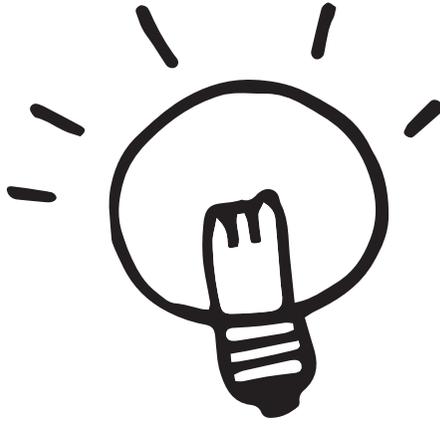
Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roshan". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping 'R' and a horizontal line underneath the name.

Roshan Thiran

*P.S. "The universe is made of stories, not of atoms." —Muriel Rukeyser  
If you have not heard of the story of Leaderonomics, google our videos on YouTube or go to [www.leaderonomics.org](http://www.leaderonomics.org). We are always looking for partners to support our vision of democratising leadership in all developing countries in the world. Join our journey and let us make a difference in the world we live in. All the best!*





## Roshan Says:

“

I worked at General Electric for more than 13 years. My first 7 years there, our CEO was Jack Welch. Jack was the consummate leader. He was inspirational yet firm. Forceful and commanding, yet he spent countless hours teaching. I learnt so much about leadership from him and am glad to kick off the first article in this book with an article by Jack and Suzy Welch. They share their 10 leadership secrets that helped them succeed. Jack was after all named Manager of the Century and we could surely pick up a skill or two on leadership from him.

”

## Chapter 1

# 10 Leadership Lessons to Live By

*By JACK and SUZY WELCH*

IF you're a leader, be it of three people or 3,000, it's your flat-out responsibility to not just go into work every day and improvise around the latest crisis or email flurry or employee meltdown, but to go into work every day with a cohesive plan of action about how you're going to lead. Otherwise, why would anyone follow you, except that they simply have to?

That's no good.

So here are 10 leadership lessons for you, and for the team you lead, to live by:

### **1. Get in their skin**

From the day you become a leader, your biggest role is to build trust, respect and support from your team. A mutual respect. As long as they deliver, you will support them and stand up for them in every way—and they know it. It's a never-ending job and you can never slip up.

### **2. Over-communicate**

It's your job to communicate your message, your values, what is right about what is happening, and what is wrong over and over

again. There can be no lack of transparency. Everybody has to be on the same page. Even when you are ready to gag over the message, you have to keep communicating it.

### **3. Follow up relentlessly**

Just because you say something once, it does not mean it is going to happen. Too often, managers think, “Hey, I told my team what to do.” Then they come back a week later and nothing has happened. Yes, your job is to set the direction. But you also have to make it your mission to follow up—relentlessly—to see that things are moving in the right direction.

### **4. Create a rallying cry**

I have always found that defining an enemy is very helpful. Define a competitor who is coming after you. Rally the team around every win you have against them, every new product you introduce that is better than theirs. Make that competitor come alive as your true enemy and you will see your team galvanise around beating them and winning in the marketplace.

### **5. Realise personnel actions speak louder than words**

When you pick someone for a new job, you are defining what is important. Managers love to give speeches about how their new initiative is the most important thing in the world. But then they put whatever warm body happens to be available in charge of it. Nothing could be worse.

When you make a personnel appointment, you are doing much more than any speech you could ever give. The people in the organisation already know who the star performers are. And matching those stars with the projects you claim are important is absolutely critical for your credibility and the trust you want to build.

## **6. Embrace the generosity gene**

I happen to believe that every good leader loves to give raises to people. They are thrilled to see their employees grow and be promoted. They are turned on by their successes. Good leaders understand that they are only as good as the reflected glory of their people and they give until it hurts.

## **7. Fight bureaucracy**

Remember how much you hated bureaucracy from the bosses above you when they wanted this “i” dotted and this “t” crossed? Guess what? You are now the leader. So don't let bureaucracy creep into your place.

Just because it is yours does not make it any prettier than when it was someone else's. Get rid of clutter. Bureaucracy slows things down and speed is one of the best competitive advantages you can have.

## **8. Find a better way**

Recognise that in business, somebody out there is always doing something better than you are. Your team can get insular and come to believe they are already doing everything right.

Your job is to ask: “How can we do it better? Where can we find someone doing it better?”

Finding a better way of doing things every single day can become so much more than a slogan. It can become a way of life and will make your group stand out above the rest.

## **9. Own up to hiring mistakes**

Look, you're not the only person in the history of the universe who has ever made a hiring mistake. Once you understand that

hiring is hard work and that you will surely have missteps along the way, realise that you have got to deal with mistakes fast and compassionately.

Recognise that it was your fault that the fit didn't work and get on with it. The team will respect you more. The hire you dealt with fairly will respect you more. And your superiors will reward you for your candour and willingness to own up to your error.

## **10. Dig into crises**

Without doubt, crises are going to erupt in your career. You'll have someone do something wrong or have to face a violation somewhere in your organisation. To make matters worse, when you first hear about it, you're not going to get the whole story—after all, you're the boss.

You're only going to get the tip of the iceberg. Underneath the surface is a very big piece of ice. Your team will come to you and feed you, piece by piece, a slow drip exposé of the crisis.

Your job is to dig deep, early and fast, to get it all to the surface. Be candid. Recognise there are no secrets anywhere. Get the right people involved immediately.

And you will see a swifter resolution to problems that people all too often try to brush under the carpet.

*Jack Welch is founder and distinguished professor at the Jack Welch Management Institute at Strayer University. Suzy Welch is a best-selling author, popular television commentator, and noted business journalist. Since 2005, they have written business columns for several established publications, including Businessweek, Fortune, and the New York Times.*



## Roshan Says:

“ One of the saddest things I see in many organisations is when a high potential employee fails to fulfil his or her potential. There are lots of chatter and talk by these employees that they could achieve greatness and reach for the stars. Yet, the proof is in the pudding.

Most of these supposedly “high-potential” and highly talented employees never end up “putting a dent in the universe.” Why is this so? I personally think it is because their tolerance for pain is minimal.

Great leaders not only withstand constant pain (which may at times include hardships, significant obstacles and even employee disloyalty and turmoil), they embrace pain as a necessary part of their personal growth.

Huge waves that would often frighten an ordinary swimmer produce a tremendous thrill for the surfer who is willing to ride them. Great leaders convert pain into opportunity and joy. I wrote this article to inspire us all to embrace pain and struggles, and to translate them into a positive growth opportunity. ”



## Chapter 2

# Dung is Good? Pain is Better?

**“No Pain, No Gain” holds true for leadership development at all levels**

*By ROSHAN THIRAN*

A few months ago, I read one of Ajahn Brahmavamsa Mahathera’s (also known as Ajahn Brahm or Peter Betts) short stories from his book *Who Ordered This Truckload of Dung?* and it got me thinking about pain.) Brahm studied at Cambridge and later became a Buddhist monk. He believes that the difference between a happy person and a depressed one is how we respond to difficulties and disasters in our life.

His story starts by asking us to imagine being out and returning home to find a huge truckload of manure (dung!) left in front of your home’s entrance. The dung is awfully filthy and stinks up your whole house. And worst, you have no idea why this manure is on your front porch. You are stuck with it!

Brahm explains: “In this metaphor, the truckload of dung in front of the house stands for the traumatic experiences that are dumped on us in life.”

Brahm claims that how we react to this dung defines us. We can lament, moan and complain, “Why me?”, while slowly watching this dung destroy our happiness and ruin our friendships (no one wants to be around a “smelly” person or visit a house that stinks).

Soon, we sink into a negative state and our lives spiral into depression and anger. This happens to many people and businesses. The adversities of life affect us and we end up making excuses for the terrible calamity that has befallen us. Before long, our lives (and the businesses that we lead) spiral down into an unsalvageable state.

Another way to respond is to first moan and sigh because of the calamity. But then, we proactively figure a way out of the mess. Brahm believes that these type of folks will bring out “the wheelbarrow, the fork, and the spade. They fork the dung into the barrow, wheel it around the back of the house, and dig it into the garden.”

These folks go through much pain and difficulty to move dung slowly into the garden. It may take months but little by little every day, the pile of dung gets smaller, till it finally disappears. According to Brahm’s parable, another amazing thing happens: “The flowers in our garden are bursting out in a richness of colour all over the place. Their fragrance wafts down the street so that the neighbours, and even passers-by, smile in delight. Then the fruit tree in the corner is nearly falling over, it’s so heavy with sweet fruit. There’s so much of it that we are able to share it with our neighbours.”

Brahm makes a point that welcoming tragedies in our life can sometimes act as “fertilisers” to enhance other parts of our life. Going through painful times may actually help us become better leaders and allow us to become a richer and wiser person.

### **The Wayne Rooney story**

As I pondered this story, I recall speaking to Ray Hall, who was Wayne Rooney’s first coach at Everton Football Club. One of the things I queried Hall on was how the Everton academy continuously produced world-class Premier League players.

As Hall explained the philosophy of development at Everton, I was not quite satisfied with his response as what he said seemed to be done also at other academies. I pressed further for an answer and asked Hall how they specifically developed Rooney. He explained very simply, “Rooney was given lots of pain and lots of love.”

When Rooney was the best player in his age group, they would “force” Rooney to go up to a higher level age group. Most boys, when moved up to an age group with bigger, more skilled and faster kids, generally end up unhappy. Whilst in his own age group, Rooney got to score many goals and show off, whereas in the higher age group he had to go through a painful process of learning new skills, being outmuscled and coping at a much higher level. It is generally not fun for kids. Yet, Hall and his coaches encouraged and “pushed” Rooney on to the next level even though he may not have been the happiest camper in the group.

This process repeated itself numerous times till Rooney made Everton’s first team at age 16. Again, he was a reserve player and was used sparingly which annoyed most players. He had to “fight” with better players until he truly became good enough. This constant “pushing” forced Rooney to grow faster. Although he may have hated not being a “star” as he moved to higher age groups, this painful process enabled his football career to become world class.

### **Pain in business**

Business leaders who have successfully built their business had to endure significant pain in the process. Yet, once they have succeeded, we hardly reference the pain they had to endure. Steve Job’s second act of resurrecting Apple is constantly highlighted by many, but most forget the painful experience he had of being fired by the very company he founded. Or of failing at numerous ventures after Apple. Yet those experiences defined him significantly.

Many leaders had to endure painful rejection early in their careers. Walt Disney was fired from the Kansas City Star in 1919 because he “lacked imagination and had no good ideas.” J.K. Rowling, who is now famous for the Harry Potter series, was rejected by dozens of publishing houses, including HarperCollins. She didn’t let the pain of rejection deter her. Oprah Winfrey was fired as an evening news reporter of Baltimore’s WJZ-TV because she couldn't separate her emotions from her stories. And if you ask any business leader in Malaysia about their pain and struggles, you will be surprised at how many painful episodes they had to endure before reaching the top.

Whenever I interview famous Malaysian CEOs in *The Leaderonomics Show*, I never fail to find painful experiences and tragedies that each of them had to face and overcome in their journey of leading their company to being the best in Malaysia and regionally.

### **What does this mean?**

John Maxwell once said: “Pain prompts us to face who we are and where we are. What we do with that experience defines who we become.” Most of us run away from pain but the best leaders embrace pain and constantly work to get more “pain” into their lives.

So, how do we add more pain to our lives? Below are some practical ways to add “pain” to your life:

#### **1. Volunteer for special projects**

Whenever there is “out of scope work,” be the first to volunteer. When I worked at GE, there used to be numerous special work that cropped up from time to time including deals, acquisitions or integration projects. I was always the first to volunteer and ended up getting my fair share of “extra work.” This “extra work” translated into huge learning opportunities and also enabled me to access senior leaders of the organisation, thereby opening up numerous career opportunities.

## **2. Look out for “safe” failure opportunities**

When I was in university, I started a business that grew very quickly but crumbled as we tried to scale it. Although it was painful to see the business blow up, it did not ruin me. In fact, that failure was the stepping stone to my later success. If you can experience and experiment early in life with “safe” mistakes that will not ruin you, you may avoid significant pitfalls later on.

## **3. Learn something new each year**

Learning is one of the most painful experiences one goes through. Learning a new language or a new skill (i.e. computer programming) can be a harrowing experience for many. But if you “force” yourself to learn one new thing a year, the pain of learning will be mitigated by the future joy from growth.

## **4. Accept the hardest roles and jobs**

One advice my first boss, Mike Petrucelli, gave me was to always accept the hardest jobs around. He told me to take on the job that nobody wanted because you would learn the most (even if you didn’t succeed), but it would also provide you with the biggest upside (if you succeeded). I always took his advice and am thankful. The first few months in these “hard” jobs are terrifying but once you succeed, the world is truly your oyster.

## **5. Face your fears and pain head on**

The most terrifying thing about painful experiences is the present moment when you need to face the pain. Don’t avoid or run away from the pain. Usually, they may last for only short bursts of time and you will soon look back at those moments and joke about it to others going through similar pains. Remember, pain is temporary but gains may last a lifetime.

## **6. Stack your painful tasks upfront**

Always start with the hardest, most difficult and annoying tasks first. By doing this, as you end your day with the more fun and easier tasks, you will be able to remember it as a good day. By scheduling pain early in the day (or in a process), you always end up never remembering the pain.

### **Final thoughts**

Michelangelo said, “In every block of marble I see a statue as plain as though it stood before me, shaped and perfect in attitude and action. I have only to hew away the rough walls that imprison the lovely apparition to reveal it to the other eyes as mine see it.”

Hewing away the rough edges is indeed a painful process for the marble. Yet, if that process is not done, the magnificent statue will never be erected. Likewise, greatness is within us. To enable greatness to emanate from us, we need to go through plenty of trials and tribulations that will “hew away our rough edges” and allow this greatness to shine through. So, don’t worry when dung is thrown in front of your house. Smile and be grateful for the pain!





## Roshan Says:

“ Giving feedback is one of the most challenging parts of the leadership journey. Most leaders struggle with giving feedback as they fear that when they provide feedback, they end up angering and annoying the employee. Leaders fear that being candid means not showing care and concern. Leadership guru and author, John Maxwell, takes a shot at answering this conundrum in his article. ”

## Chapter 3

# Do You Care Enough to be Honest with Me?

*By JOHN MAXWELL*

AS a leader, have you ever avoided confrontation with a follower for what you labelled “good” reasons? I think most of us have. And if we’re honest with ourselves, we’ll admit that we sometimes give in to this temptation.

Why do we do that? I believe the main reason well-intentioned leaders aren’t completely honest with their people is that they don’t see how they can be candid and caring at the same time.

Care and candour do not have to be mutually exclusive. Deep down, we all want someone in our lives who is willing to tell us the truth that would help us, even if it hurts at the time.

It’s like when a surgeon operates on you, it may hurt, but it doesn’t harm you. Its purpose is to heal. The doctor’s intention is to help you. Part of a leader’s job is to value not only the person, but also their potential, and to do what is necessary to help the person achieve it. That means being honest, but doing it in a way that builds people, not tear them down.

So how do we balance caring and candour?

First of all, we need to recognise that caring has to come first. People do not care how much you know until they know how much you care. By establishing a relationship first, you qualify yourself to speak truth into their lives, even when it may hurt.

Second, we need to ask ourselves some important questions as we approach the situation:

- Have I invested in the relationship enough to be candid?
- Do I truly value them as individuals?
- Am I sure this is their issue and not mine?
- Am I sure I'm not speaking up because I feel threatened?
- Do I consider the relationship more important than the issue?
- Does this conversation clearly serve their interests and not just mine?
- Am I willing to invest time and energy to help them change?
- Am I willing to show them how to do something, not just say what's wrong?
- Am I willing and able to set clear, specific expectations?

When you've decided to confront an issue and speak candidly to a follower, here are four rules for caring candour:

1. Do it quickly. Never allow an issue to fester.
2. Do it calmly. If you're angry, you will not be caring enough.
3. Do it privately. It's never helpful to humiliate another person.
4. Do it thoughtfully. Work to avoid embarrassment or intimidation.

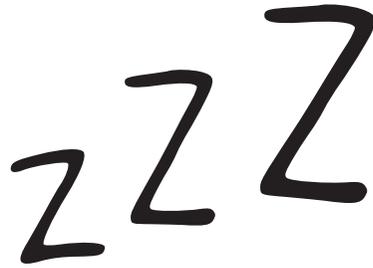
Caring establishes the relationship between a leader and a follower, but candour expands the relationship.

Once a relationship has been established on a foundation of caring, it needs to grow. That requires candour.

By balancing care and candour, you can do what you need to get done, and at the same time help the people you lead to grow toward their greater potential.



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## Roshan Says:

“ Recently, a young CEO from India passed away. He was a fit athlete and had no medical conditions. Unfortunately, he died due to exhaustion and lack of sleep. One of the biggest pitfalls of the leadership role is the challenge of knowing when to take a break and rest. Joseph Tan explores this important aspect of rest and how great leaders are not defined by the amount of activities on their plate but rather by the clarity of priorities. ”

## Chapter 4

# Are You Restless or Are You Restful?

*By JOSEPH TAN*

I love my Google Calendar. It organises my life and shows me what I need to do each day without having me perform a series of mental gymnastics. However, just going through the checklist of what needs to be accomplished each day still falls short of what constitutes a fulfilling day.

Being able to cram in more activities increases a sense of achievement—but not necessarily a sense of actualisation.

Nature is set up for cycles of effectiveness with seasons of work and rest. Even the land requires a period of inactivity (rest) in order for it to regain a fertile state for the next growth season.

With the ever-increasing expectations for higher performance, does the concept of being well-rested even make sense in today's demanding workplace?

Could it be that we now have gotten so much into the productive mode that rightful rest is now a term of extinction while continuous work is becoming a mark of distinction?

Are you restless or are you restful?

## **Rest vs Entertainment**

The most common respond to a “How are you?” greeting usually goes like this: “I am very busy but what choice do I have?”

There is almost a certain sense of unavoidable fate when it comes to expressing the state of the workplace and the thought of planned rest is foreign to most of us—so much so that towards the end of the year, we usually face the malady of accumulated annual leave!

Some have gotten so used to working that taking a holiday is an unwelcome break and they can't wait to get back to the workplace again.

As a quick pit stop, there are those who would resort to the world of entertainment for self-recharging, kind of like letting the hair down. While entertainment and amusement do offer a respite from the hustle and bustle of work, they fall short of providing that internal recuperation we need to send us back with increased enthusiasm and motivation.

Here are three symptoms that may indicate you are getting more entertainment than rest:

1. You go to a loud environment hoping to drown the voice of frustration within.
2. You prefer to be constantly in the company of people rather than to be aware of your own thoughts.
3. You constantly wake up on a Monday morning with a hangover (rather than being motivated to face the adventures of the coming week).

Please don't get me wrong. I am not saying that we should abandon all forms of entertainment. I do enjoy fun and varied entertaining activities, which provide a refreshing break.

However, in the words of Ravi Zacharias: “If we start to listen with our eyes and think with our feelings, then there is something soulful which is missing in the way we care for ourselves when we do not embrace the basics of listening and thinking.”

The danger of this visual age is that we weary ourselves with incessant entertainment while depriving ourselves from taking inspirational rest.

### **Rest vs Happiness**

The pursuit of happiness can be a restless quest.

The most common response to the question, “What is your goal in life?” is this: “I want to be happy.” Of course, happiness is a driving emotion, which fuels much of the energy we need to go through with the ordeals of the day.

If happiness is the sole element, which drives me, then there is cause for concern because emotions are designed as triggers, i.e. emotion provides an indication of where I am but it lacks the depth and stability to tell me where I should go. In other words, emotion has descriptive value but not a directional one.

So, how does the concept of rest come in? Without a sense of rest, the pursuit of happiness can actually be quite an exhausting affair—constantly looking for the next emotional high, the next adrenaline rush or the next great self-esteem project.

Without rest, our perception of what makes us happy can be misguided by the influences of popular culture and peer pressure. Now, there is nothing wrong with desiring to be happy. However, our happiness needs to be anchored on solid principles rather than fleeting emotions.

Here are three solid principles worth anchoring on:

1. Have a life purpose. Nothing energises you like having a clearly defined purpose statement.
2. Leave a legacy. When you are constantly thinking about the next generation, you have very little time to complain about the current generation.
3. Be comfortable in saying “no.” Not every invitation that comes your way is worth your while.

Think about it. How can these principles be internalised in someone unless there are moments of purposeful reflection and personal rest? Your pursuit of happiness will become a journey of joy if you take time to rest along the way—taking off time to journal, to reflect and to ask the “Why am I doing what I am doing?” question every now and then.

### **Priorities precede rest**

Restless people are constantly looking for the next big thing. Restful people have already decided what the big thing would be. Restless people look to their emotions as their authoritative guide while restful people are guided by the strength of their convictions.

The quality of one’s rest depends not on the quality of entertainment but by the clarity of his or her priorities in life. Once your priorities are crystal clear, you will find it easier to say “no” to the many distractions that come your way—this ability to say “no” to tempting but distracting activities is the foundation of being rested.

With hard work, you will achieve success but with the right amount of rest and reflection along the way, you will achieve significance. With hard work, you will achieve material wealth but with intentional rest and soul-searching, you will achieve meaning.

## **Concluding remarks**

Nowadays, I still enjoy using my Google Calendar for the simple reason that it organises my life but it does not dictate it. That which dictates my life comes from the clarity of my priorities and not the clamouring of my activities.

*Joseph Tan is CEO of Leaderonomics Good Monday. His 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. Together with his wife, he has a passion for working with parents to exercise the art of leadership at home.*



## Roshan Says:

“ All my life I have been inspired by servant leaders like Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr and others who have achieved much by showing love and meekness. Yet, practising ‘meek leadership’ is one of the toughest things to do. In this article, Fabio Malagisi shares a number of principles that may be useful for each of us in our journey towards ‘meek leadership’.”

## Chapter 5

# Is Meek Leadership a Formula for Making History?

By *FABIO MALAGISI*

RECENTLY, I was posed with this question: Can meek leadership work in today's environment? As I explored this idea, it became clear that there isn't a great framework for what characterises meek leadership.

Two classic examples of meek leaders to help solidify this definition are Mahatma Gandhi and George Washington. Gandhi is often referenced with regard to meek leadership. Gandhi drove change through non-violent action, selfless intentions and principled beliefs.

His deeply centred and humble leadership style inspired widespread change across the world. He is often credited as having profound influence on future activists (and meek leaders) such as Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela and Aung San Suu Kyi.

Washington was known for possessing great humility. Often described as a “man of the people,” he wore civilian clothes and refused to be called “His Majesty.” Washington, with his servanthood nature, is known as the “father of his country” and revered as one of the greatest US presidents of all time.

Both Gandhi and Washington demonstrated meek virtues and in the process influenced future leaders. Clearly, meek leadership is a relevant and powerful form of leadership.

However, it is not just for civil servants such as Gandhi and Washington. Some of the most powerful forces influencing modern-day business clearly were guided by meek principles.

For clarity, I have personally defined meek leaders as following three critical principles:

- Leaders who are guided by a clear and principled set of values
- Leaders who view themselves as servants
- Leaders who have selfless intentions and use power to care for others

## **Delving deeper into the principles**

### **Principle 1: Clear set of values**

Brenda C. Barnes was the first female CEO at Pepsi and former CEO of Sara Lee. Before her departure from the leadership limelight due to health issues, you'd be hard-pressed to find a Forbes power list without Barnes.

She was indeed an accomplished senior executive and a role model for female executives. She was characterised as an introvert. She is also known to be calm and preferred listening.

Although not the typical CEO profile, she successfully ran multibillion-dollar operations and was well regarded as a leader. Barnes was a perfect example of our first principle of meek leadership: Leaders who are guided by a clear and principled set of values.

She was quoted saying, "The most important thing about leadership is your character and the values that guide your life."

Clearly, Barnes had a deep value system that guided her. This deep value and precious characters are important attributes for meek leaders and, more importantly, for any leader.

### **Principle 2: Servant leaders**

Henry Ford, founder of the Ford Motor Company, is arguably one of the most influential forces behind modern-day business. His adoption of the five-dollar workday, eight-hour workday, mass production methods, and focus on the middle class, formed the basis of many of our modern-day business ideals.

Ford valued his workers and had a core belief that he enabled them to lead better lives. He is quoted with the following with regards to success: “To do more for the world than the world does for you—that is success.”

He embodied the modern-day principles of “servant leadership” and as a result, revolutionised the way we think of human capital today. His desire to serve and to make an impact not just to his company, but to the world, is what sealed his legendary legacy.

### **Principle 3: Selfless intentions and power to care for others**

Sam Walton, an entrepreneur and founder of Walmart, was a charismatic force who grew Walmart into one of the most predominant brands in the world.

His insistence on referring to employees as associates gives you a glimpse of how he valued people and used his power to care for others.

In his *10 Commandments of Business*, he listed “value your associates” as one of them. Walton truly cared for others and, in doing so, built an energising and unique culture at Walmart, which now serves the world through everyday low prices.

A famous quote of his is:

*“The associates don’t care how much their manager knows until they know how much their manager cares.”*

This focus on caring is often lost among the numbers and company strategy. Walton understood this principle and used “caring” as his competitive advantage.

### **Concluding thoughts**

The unique principles of meek leaders often get overshadowed by today’s high-paced world of always searching for the next trend. Meek virtues, however, remain powerful tools that are just as relevant today as they were for Gandhi and Washington.

Our examples of leaders who embody meek virtues are impressive and range from civil rights leaders and presidents, to modern-day business trailblazers. What they all have in common is that they not only led but also made history in a meaningful way.

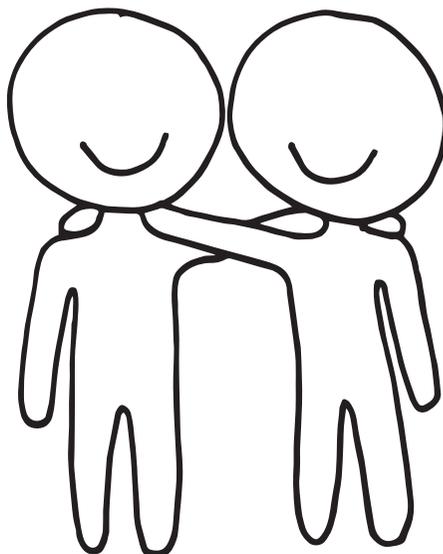
Perhaps the qualities of being value-based, serving others and using power to care for others are not only relevant to being a leader today, but makes the difference between leaders who create headlines and leaders who make history. It’s certainly something to think about.

*Fabio Malagisi is a senior finance leader with vast experience in talent development. His other interests include business and career coaching and strategy development.*



## Roshan Says:

“ Leaders are human. They crave friendships. They crave to be loved and cared for. Yet, many leadership books postulate that leaders should never create deep friendships with employees. Brian Fielkow shares his take on this matter and offers tips for leaders. ”



## Chapter 6

# Treating Employees Like Pals Can Be a Dangerous Game

By BRIAN FIELKOW

*“Keep your work life and business life separate.”*

*“Don’t get involved in your employees’ personal matters.”*

*“There is no place for friendships in the office.”*

ALL these are age-old sayings, but this advice is out of sync with what really happens in most workplaces. Inevitably, friendships form and oftentimes, it is impossible for employees to leave personal issues at home.

As business leaders, however, we have to recognise that, while work and personal lives intersect, and that while we ourselves are not immune to this intersection, we have a special responsibility to treat workplace friendships deliberately.

Knowing about your employees’ personal lives is just good management. Our employees are people with lives outside the office.

Being aware of what is going on “at home” is important, as it can impact your employees’ professional lives. Yet, while we have to be in tune with our employees’ personal lives, we also have to be equally aware of the drawbacks of this “friend zone.”

## **Beware the Friend Zone**

Friendships that develop between key executives and their employees can negatively impact business and professionalism. So, be mindful.

When friendships form, here's what executives should be exceptionally watchful of when it comes to "The Friend Zone," and how they should manage their way through it.

### **1. Cliques are corrosive**

Allowing cliques to develop is dangerous. When a group of employees starts going out to lunch, grabbing drinks after work, gossiping and excluding others, the rest of the team may feel like anonymous, unconnected, second-class citizens (some of whom may be your best workers).

Having an office that tolerates cliques will drive these superstars out the door.

### **2. This isn't a country club**

If overt friendships develop, perceptions of an uneven playing field can develop. Employees "on the outs" start to feel that your chummy pals have better access to you than does the rest of the team and that those pals are more likely to receive special treatment (e.g. deadline extensions, time out of the office, etc.)

### **3. Don't play politics**

Friendships make it more difficult to execute your duties as a manager. Imagine what will happen if a subordinate starts to take advantage of the relationship, showing up late to work, missing deadlines.

Will you be prepared to act, or will that person get away with things no one else does?

#### **4. Create separation**

You must be able to separate friendships from the execution of your duties. When the performance of one of your friends is declining, or your friend is taking advantage of the relationship and getting away with things no one else is, you must be prepared to act.

The closer friends that you are—maybe your families and spouses are friends—the more difficult this can become. However, your role as a manager is to handle these sorts of issues when they arise.

#### **Ensure a level playing field**

Friendships are going to form. Let's accept reality. But, once they do, it's all about managing them.

We will have different levels of personal chemistry with different employees, and friendships may form with some and not others.

Our duty to the organisation is paramount. We must make an extra effort to create a level playing field. We must be equally accessible to all of our team and ensure that treatment is fair and consistent.

#### **Here's how:**

##### **1. Protect your people**

Safeguard a level playing field. Make yourself equally accessible to all of your team members.

Ensure that treatment is fair and consistent, and avoid talking with your friends about business issues that they otherwise would not have access to.

## **2. Avoid forced fun**

If you're passionate about golf, roller skating, professional wrestling or anything else, don't make that the key for employees to have access to you. Appreciate that your workplace has diverse people with diverse interests. Don't force your personal passions on the team and don't make that the only (or best) way for them to have access.

## **3. Set boundaries**

If a strong friendship grows, have a conversation. Set mutually agreed-upon boundaries.

If you're really friends, the boundaries will be accepted. If they are not accepted, then you should consider whether you're being taken advantage of.

## **4. Share the wealth**

You don't have to be "friends" to have a genuine interest in what's going on with all of your team members outside of work. Showing a personal interest in your employees' lives can help you be a better manager.

For example, knowing what's going on with them personally might explain a disruption in performance and allow for faster resolution.

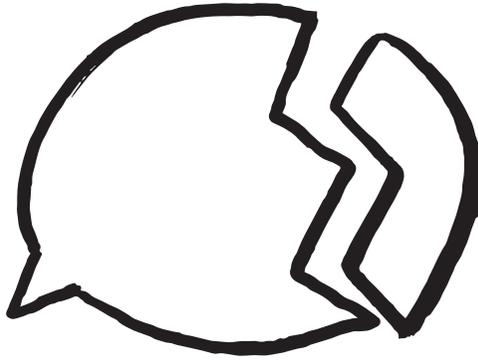
## **Concluding thoughts**

As leaders, we must know what is going on with our employees personally, to some degree. Showing an interest is the same as showing respect.

However, be aware of when that personal interaction journeys into “The Friend Zone,” and have a clear plan in place to manage it.

Ignoring this reality is sure to damage your business and even your career.

*Corporate culture and management advisor Brian Fielkow is the author of Driving to Perfection: Achieving Business Excellence by Creating a Vibrant Culture, a how-to book based on his 25 years of executive leadership experience at publicly and privately held companies. He is also president of a logistics company in Houston.*



## Roshan Says:

“ Daniel Goleman is a leading expert in emotional intelligence. He caught up with George Kohlrieser, another close friend of Leaderonomics, to discuss overcoming communication breakdown. This article was the result—a number of great pointers to overcome communication breakdown in the workplace. ”

## Chapter 7

# How to Overcome Communications Breakdown

*By DANIEL GOLEMAN*

A leader's role can get a bit messy. We all know it's not just about leading by example, living your values, and giving pep talks.

A leader must also be able to identify her team's weaknesses and find practical solutions. In my experience with organisations, a very common vulnerability is the frequent breakdown of dialogue. Why can't we connect? Why is there so much conflict? How will this project ever move forward?

I spoke with my colleague George Kohlrieser, Professor of Leadership and Organisational Behaviour, at one of the world's leading business schools, the International Institute for Management Development (IMD) in Switzerland, about what gets in the way of healthy, worthwhile dialogue—the kind of dialogue that ensures work gets done and measurable progress is made.

I've summed up his responses below.

When dialogue is great, it allows participants to discover a greater truth. This can be done between two people, or among a whole group of individuals. But to arrive at that greater truth, both sides have to meet

certain criteria and not engage in blocking behaviour. There are various ways to impede useful dialogue, which I break into two categories, primary and secondary.

### **Passivity**

This is simple. If one party is passive, that party is not engaged, and a real dialogue just won't be possible.

*For example:* Prepare yourself to be fully present for a dialogue. Remind yourself to put your phone away, make eye contact, and sit still. Focus on what the person is saying, not what you're about to say.

### **Discounting**

Whenever there are putdowns or disrespect floating through a conversation, its participants are being discounted. Being respectful is an essential part of dialogue, as is not being taken hostage by a discount, which can happen in a second.

*For example:* Plan your words carefully. Think about how you sound. "Well, I just don't get it," can be taken as a discount. It would probably be wiser to say: "Can you explain this idea a bit more?"

### **Redefining**

Not answering questions or blocking them is also called redefining a transaction. This never works for having a great dialogue. And how many meetings are filled with people who don't answer questions?

*For example:* People may react to how a question is asked, not the question itself. If asked with a gruff tone, people may shut down, tune out, become defensive, or change the subject. Notice your mindset. If you're angry or frustrated, take a moment to get into a neutral state before starting a difficult conversation.

## **Over-detailing**

Giving more details than is unnecessary. Now if you think about meetings and you think about limiting the amount of details shared in them, the amount of time you could save would be incredible.

*For example:* Know when to cut your answers short. If a colleague asks how a call went with a particular client, and you feel yourself ready to vent, take a breath and remember it's not the time.

## **The four-sentence rule**

It's become pretty clear that a person can really only maintain maximum full attention for only four sentences. Whenever you've gone beyond four sentences, be aware that the listener's brain is on over-alert, and he or she is probably getting exhausted.

*For example:* If you want to be heard, keep your statements concise. When someone has to expend a lot of energy to listen, they tend to just shut down. Your potential for a great dialogue is immediately lost. And then there's what I call secondary blocks—generalisation, rationalisation, exaggeration, and lack of honesty. These also get in the way, but to a lesser degree. Watch out for them.

But when you work to eliminate these primary blocks—over-detailing, redefinition, discounting, and passivity—you will start having much better dialogues. Try it!

*Daniel Goleman is co-director of the Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence in organisations at Rutgers University, co-author of Primal Leadership: Leading with Emotional Intelligence, and author of The Brain and Emotional Intelligence: New Insights and Leadership: Selected Writings. His latest book is A Force for Good: The Dalai Lama's Vision for Our World.*

## Roshan Says:

“ This book would not be complete without an article from George Kohlrieser himself. Kohlrieser worked closely with one of the US government agencies as a hostage negotiator. He has written a number of award-winning books including *Hostage at the Table: How Leaders can Overcome Conflict, Influence Others and Raise Performance*. I was inspired by this article and the Azim Khamisa story. Kohlrieser mentioned this story at a programme we were co-facilitating. Forgiveness is not a topic often expounded in business circles though there is significant power in forgiveness, especially for senior leaders. ”



## Chapter 8

# The Power of Forgiveness: A Key to High-performance Leadership

*By GEORGE KOHLRIESER*

IMAGINE what your life would be like if someone murdered one of your immediate family members. What if it was your son or daughter? Think about the anger and bitterness you would feel towards that person. Surely it would consume both your personal and professional life. Would you ever be able to move on?

Hopefully, none of you reading this has endured such a tragedy. But surely all of us have dealt with profound feelings of betrayal, injustice and loss of an important expectation whether on the job or at home. Do you let such occurrences consume and hold you hostage? Or are you able to go through the recovery and grieving process so that you defeat and overcome the adversity as quickly as possible, not vice versa? No person better personifies this than Azim Khamisa, a former investment banker who tragically lost his only son to gang violence. His story encapsulates how one can learn to forgive and find peace again in all areas of life.

### **Azim Khamisa's story**

On Jan 21, 1995, Azim Khamisa's 20-year-old son Tariq was shot and killed by four youth gang members. Tony Hicks, 14, pointed a gun and

with a single shot took the life of Tariq because he had refused to deliver a pizza without first being paid. It was a long process, but ultimately Azim chose not to seek revenge over the loss of his son. Instead he chose forgiveness and peace.

“I took a different response to this tragedy,” Azim told an audience at International Institute for Management Development’s (IMD) high performance leadership programme.

I saw Tariq as a victim of the 14-year-old, and I saw the 14-year-old as a victim of society. Both were victims at opposite ends of a gun.

Azim shares that as a member of society, he too felt responsible for the bullet that took the life of his son. Even more stunning, he reached out to Tony’s grandfather Ples Felix, who had custody of Tony at the time of the murder, with a hand of compassion and forgiveness.

Together, the two men from completely different backgrounds founded the Tariq Khamisa Foundation that is helping to bring attention to teen violence worldwide and is teaching peace and forgiveness as a means to conflict resolution. Azim has spoken with Tony on multiple occasions and upon his release from prison, Tony will have a job at the foundation.

Azim was able to forgive Tony in order to move through the grieving process and ultimately find joy again. He says: “Forgiveness is something you do for yourself. If I did not forgive Tony, I would be very angry at him, and if I am angry, who does it hurt? Myself.”

**How does forgiveness relate to high-performance business leadership?**

How does this connect to your daily professional activities? We rarely speak about forgiveness in an organisational or professional context.

However, to understand effective high-performing leadership, you have to be cognisant of the many people in organisations who are suffering from emotional pain inflicted by others for whatever reasons and to various degrees.

There are many breach of trust cases which people do not let go of. Instead, they hold on to resentment.

How do you deal with unwarranted criticism and backstabbing attempts on the job? How do you overcome betrayal, jealousy, rejection, disrespect, disappointments and the long list of possible negative work-related experiences?

In addition, how do you deal with disappointments in your personal life? As work and home are interconnected, it should come as no surprise that most individuals who are satisfied in their personal life perform better on the job. On the other hand, a major upheaval in one's personal life often leads to a sense of dissatisfaction and underperformance at work. Effective leaders must be at peace with themselves and the events in their lives past and present. Everyone, especially leaders, must make attachments, create bonds and go through separation and grieve to recovery and return to the full joy of work and life. You can deny it or you can deal with it.

There are eight stages of grief—denial; protest and anger; sadness, missing or longing; fear about what will happen next; mental and emotional acceptance; forming new attachments or renewing a bond; forgiveness; and finally, finding full gratitude and joy again.

Of these, forgiveness can be one of the hardest and at the same time, the deepest healing experiences. Forgiveness means to literally be able to give again.

In other words, it means that we use our energy to be able to “give for” and to go back out to others. People who are not able to forgive tend to become victims or persecutors. They are unhappy, cynical, negative, defensive and they suffer.

In effect they become “hostages” or “take others hostage.” The victim and the victim-turned-persecutor tend not to be able to experience real joy, genuine love or full gratitude. If you look at the cycle of grieving, you will see that forgiveness is the fundamental stage to experience gratitude and the joy of life again.

If Azim could forgive someone for the murder of his only son, surely all of us too can work towards resolving conflicts and overcome adversities to unleash in ourselves the energy and power to lead more effectively. As a result of his actions, Azim has been recognised with a number of prominent awards, including The Search for Common Ground International Award (acknowledged alongside Desmond Tutu and Ted Koppel) and the National Crime Victims Special Community Service Award presented by former US President Bill Clinton and former Attorney-General Janet Reno.

Perhaps you may not gain such high-profile recognition but surely, like Azim, you can use the power of forgiveness to reach new heights as a leader and at the same time be a model for others to learn this very important emotional intelligence skill.

### **Encourage forgiveness in the workplace**

Have you ever thought of the benefits of forgiveness in the workplace? Have you ever thought how a more forgiving workforce can increase the productivity of your organisation? We give you three simple ideas on how to promote a culture of forgiveness in your organisation and reap the benefits:

1. Like everything else, such a culture has to start with the leaders and then slowly progress throughout all ranks of the company.
2. Forgiveness is not easy. Nurturing a culture whereby leaders, and subsequently all employees are willing to accept their faults and apologise would definitely help.
3. Happy employees are less prone to hatred and revenge, and allow for a more hospitable environment, one that can allow space for forgiveness.

*George Kohlbrieser is author of Hostage at the Table: How Leaders Can Overcome Conflict, Influence Others, and Raise Performance (Jossey-Bass, Warren Bennis Series), an international best-selling book translated into 12 languages. The book was awarded best leadership book in France and best management book in Germany.*

## Roshan Says:

“ Phil Coulson is the unsung hero of the Avengers. He is also like us—a mere mortal with no super powers. All he has is his humanity and leadership. Lily Cheah draws upon this character for leadership lessons that we, as mere mortals, can relate to and learn from. ”

# S.H.I.E.L.D.

## Chapter 9

# Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.'s Phil Coulson Shows Us the Joys and Pains of Leadership

By LILY CHEAH

TELEVISION series Marvel's *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* is perhaps the lesser-known little brother in the Marvel universe. Next to the Avengers movie franchise, armed with a mega budget for Hollywood stars and an alien-load of special effects, *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* is, in contrast, far humbler. No over-the-top explosions and large-scale destruction here. That said, fellow fans of the series will applaud its intriguing storyline (which began very slowly in season one at the end of 2013, but improved exponentially thereafter, I promise) and charming characters.

The series follows a team of agents from S.H.I.E.L.D. (Strategic Homeland Intervention, Enforcement and Logistics Division) under the leadership of Phil Coulson (played by Clark Gregg), who also appeared in the first Avengers film.

After Nick Fury fakes his death in the first Avengers film, timed towards the end of season one of *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.*, Fury appoints Coulson as the new S.H.I.E.L.D. director.

A down-to-earth character who wears his heart on his sleeve, Coulson gives no air of mystery like Fury. Through seasons one and two, both before his promotion and after it, viewers get to know a man who deeply cares for his team, and for all that S.H.I.E.L.D. stands for.

In Fury's eyes, there was no other person he would rather have to replace him. "There's no one else I trust with this," Fury informs Coulson in his brief appearance in episode 22 of season one.

### **The ups and the downs of leading**

Fortunately, scriptwriters don't tuck Coulson's personal struggles and journey of leading S.H.I.E.L.D. neatly behind the action and drama of a crumbling S.H.I.E.L.D. and the aggression of HYDRA and the Inhuman.

Coulson's worries are given screen time to make themselves known, as are his triumphs. And admirably (for a show about super-powered beings, science geniuses and highly skilled plus highly good-looking fighters), his journey is very human, and very relatable.

I wouldn't call these "lessons." They'd be more aptly termed "observations" made of the journey of an individual in a position of leadership, with the desire to do the best he can. It also doesn't hurt that these apply even in our non-Marvel world.

#### **1. A position of leadership is a vulnerable place**

Along with the directorship of the entire S.H.I.E.L.D. comes power (and yes, responsibility), but also, vulnerability.

Coulson's leadership ability is intensely scrutinised by his team and members of S.H.I.E.L.D. network after he rises to the position of director.

Is he capable? Is he sane? Why is he so transfixed on finding the Puerto Rican alien city? Is he alien?

Of course, it doesn't help that Fury had injected alien blood (specifically, Kree) into Coulson to revive him from the dead. (You didn't forget that Coulson died in the first Avengers movie, did you?)

Coulson isn't immune to these credibility jabs. He doubts himself and even thinks himself crazy at one point. Add to this the fact he must rebuild a broken S.H.I.E.L.D. with limited resources, and we observe a man who truly, at many points, just has to take it one day at a time.

Phil Coulson: *The reality is I don't have a fleet of helicarriers or Quinn jets or thousands of agents at my disposal anymore. We're lucky we still have our George Foreman grill.* (Season two, episode two)

## **2. Building and maintaining trust is not easy**

Despite being under scrutiny, and unsure himself of the effects of the Kree blood that resurrected him, Coulson still has to continue the operations of S.H.I.E.L.D. and build trust within his new, much larger team.

One big camp of sceptics is led by Agent Robert Gonzales, who distrusts Coulson to the point where he and his team on S.H.I.E.L.D. aircraft carrier "Iliad" dub themselves "the real S.H.I.E.L.D." Talk about a covert rebellion.

Of course, as director, there are also secrets he cannot disclose, and Coulson fully bears the consequences of the tension this creates even with his close friend, Agent Melinda May (played by Ming-Na Wen).

May: *All those overseas trips you were taking. They were never about recruiting new agents, were they? You want to tell me what Theta-Protocol is?*

Coulson: *No.*

May: *Because you don't trust me.*

Coulson: *Because you're not the director of S.H.I.E.L.D.*

May: *Neither are you.* (Season two, episode 19)

### **3. No one can plan away unexpected circumstances**

Even if decisions are weighed out and made with the best of intentions, nothing guarantees a smooth ride. Coulson's decision to go into the alien city in Puerto Rico ultimately resulted in the death of Agent Antoine Triplett.

And allowing Agent Gonzales to visit Jia Ying, the leader of the Inhuman, instead of himself, in an attempt to build trust with the "real S.H.I.E.L.D."? It sparked off a war.

Plus, who could have guessed that Agent Grant Ward, a core member of Coulson's team in season one, was part of HYDRA? True, from the audience's perspective, it was one of the most exciting developments of the series. But from the team's perspective, it was crushing.

Ward: *I thought we were rebuilding trust, Coulson. I can help you. I'm still part of your team.*

Coulson: *My team? You... You are not part nor will you never be on my team. You dropped Fitz-Simmons out of a plane. You betrayed every one of us.* (Season two, episode six)

### **4. Despite it all, having a team willing to run with you is remarkably fulfilling**

Through it all, Coulson still commits to always doing his best for

S.H.I.E.L.D. and his team. This devotion and integrity ultimately keeps Coulson's team with him through every season.

Even Agent May recuperates from her anger at being kept in the dark about Theta Protocol (which by the way, was the large ship Fury used to save the residents of Sokovia in *Avengers: Age of Ultron*).

The final episode of season two aired on May 12, 2015 and though it presented a few shockers that will undoubtedly fuel the plot for season three, we do see Coulson's team back together, and HYDRA and Jia Ying defeated. For now, at least.

Having seen how Coulson's character has grown through both seasons, and his consistent demonstration of admirable leadership, it is a satisfying ending to see his team by him, with their trust placed in him no matter how unconventional his tactics, and no matter how alien his blood may be.

May: *Coulson, it's a solid plan you've mapped out, but it hinges on a gamble—a big one.*

Coulson: *And back up isn't coming. It'll be just the four of us. We'll be outmanned and outgunned. But Fury always said . . . a man can accomplish anything when he realises he's a part of something bigger. A team of people who share that conviction can change the world. So, what do you say? You ready to change the world?*

May: *No. I'm ready to kick some \*\*\*.*

Coulson: *That works, too.* (Season one, episode 22)

*Lily Cheah is a big fan of Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D. For those who follow, isn't it horrible what happened to Simmons?*

## Roshan Says:

“ After a short sabbatical, I started to explore why some companies never became successful in spite of reinventing their leadership ethos. I realised there was more to leadership. As I began to investigate and research this mystery, I began developing the Four Constraints model. Upon watching *Star Wars Episode VII: The Force Awakens*, in December 2015, I saw with perfect clarity, the Four Constraints model fit reinforced. It can be used to explain why the great Galactic Empire (or even the First Order) is bound to fail. ”



## Chapter 10

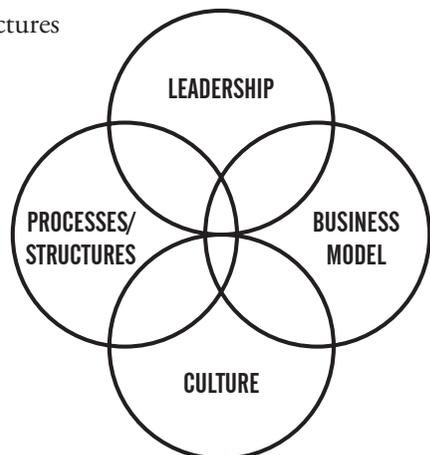
# Why the Galactic Empire Will Never Strike Back

By *ROSHAN THIRAN*

AS the Star Wars fever reaches epic levels with the launch of *Episode VII*, I started looking at the entire Star Wars ecosystem and realised that there were some “epic” similarities with the “**Four Constraints**” model I developed several years ago. So, what is this Four Constraints model? The model basically outlines four key reasons why most organisations fail to become a high performance organisation. The constraints are also the reasons why small and medium-sized enterprises fail to scale and why larger organisations fail to have continued sustainable growth.

The four constraints are:

1. Business Model deficiencies
2. Processes/Organisational structures
3. Leadership
4. Culture



## **1. Business Model**

This is simple. If you have a wrong business model, you will fail. If you have a wrong strategy in place, you will ultimately be doomed. For years, in spite of seeing the advent of the smartphones and with Apple and Samsung ripping up their mobile phone market dominance, Nokia refused to relook at its business model. By the time it did, it was too late.

The same happened to Eastman Kodak who refused to budge from their “film” business model.

Your business model and strategy is the cornerstone of your success. If you are having issues scaling your business, your business model and strategy may be an issue.

In Star Wars, the Galactic Empire and the Emperor had a strategy to wipe out the rebellion and establish themselves as the ultimate Lord. Their business model was a simple one—build the Death Star and use it to wipe out rebel planets. The Empire spent countless resources, including crazy amounts of manpower, money and effort to build the Death Star.

After successfully destroying only one planet, the Rebels destroyed the Death Star.

After the destruction of the first Death Star, neither the Emperor nor Darth Vader decides to relook at their “failed” business strategy. Instead, they decided to rebuild a bigger, newer Death Star. Again, the Rebels managed to destroy it.

The Empire clung on to an obsolete business model and strategy. And they kept trying to “ride a dead horse.” The “Dead Horse” theory postulates that no matter how hard you beat up a dead horse, you will not be able to revive it.

If you are trying to scale or develop a high performance business, is your business model or strategy letting you down? Keep looking at it and never be afraid to tweak, or explore alternatives, especially if the market or circumstances have dictated your business model void.

## **2. Processes or organisational structures**

One of the biggest mistakes organisations make is to focus on people. Yes, you read that right! The problem with solely focusing on people is that we end up pampering our people.

The key to successfully getting your employees to high performance is to focus on “process.” You can still care and love them, but your emphasis must be on building institutional processes.

One of the biggest mistake the Empire and its leadership made was to rely on their “top talent.”

This was also the same issue that Enron had. They hired smart people and focused entirely on these “special” people making the organisation great. Initially, Enron had stellar performance. But like the Empire, it ultimately blew up.

In *Episode IV: A New Hope*, the Emperor disbands the Galactic Senate and handpicks a few regional governors. By *Episode VI*, even those are gone and only Darth Vader remains as his bastion of leadership.

In fact, he is so desperate, his succession plan is to “poach” Luke Skywalker from his competition. Sounds common enough?

On the other hand, the Rebel Alliance did not focus on people but on process. They developed Yoda, Obi-Wan Kenobi, Anakin Skywalker and later Luke.

They even were able to identify and quickly immerse an external talent like Han Solo into their organisational leadership structure. They had a clear process of recruitment.

Anakin was selected from the outskirts of the galaxy and was quickly accelerated into their “talent” programme as “the force is strong with this one.” There was even a clear process of assessing potential and gaps as we saw with Anakin’s development.

They also had a clear process of talent development. Mentoring was a key part of the process. Yoda explains the mentoring process of the Alliance as “always two there are, no more, no less; a master and an apprentice.”

The Jedi spent a significant amount of time on technical training, building depth of expertise in weaponry (lightsabre training), ways of the force and even leadership skills like patience and willpower.

Anakin was put through the rigour of the Jedi Talent Management programme. So was his son Luke, with Yoda as his master in *Episode IV*. And when Luke left his training prematurely to save his friends from Darth Vader (much to Yoda’s dismay), he was clearly not ready and suffered.

Without proper systems and structures, you will never be able to scale your organisation to greatness.

In the mid nineties, I worked at NBC, a television network in New York. I remember Jack Welch yelling and commanding everyone to drive Six Sigma into every part of GE.

At NBC, Six Sigma had no relevance to these media folks who looked at it as a manufacturing process. But to calm Welch down, the NBC team

launched a big, grand, all-employee Six Sigma party with Jay Leno and other stars cracking jokes and with T-shirts and caps given out.

After the party, there was limited mention of Six Sigma. Six Sigma failed initially to take off at NBC even with an enraged Welch championing it. Welch quickly learnt and announced a new process change in GE where no one could be promoted unless they had Green Belt certification. Immediately, lots of people signed up for Six Sigma including me. Welch cleverly leveraged the new “structure” to support Six Sigma.

When you drive any change, you need to revise processes and structures to be consistently aligned with your goal and to measure and monitor progress and effectiveness. Even for talent management, you need to build systems to assess, develop, grow and retain talent.

Everything has to be a process. Processes and structures are key to ensuring a high-performance organisation. Just ask Darth Vader and he will share the perils of focusing solely on people.

### **3. Leadership**

When I talk about leadership being a constraint, it not only means the quality of leadership at the top of the organisation but also the quality of leaders all across the different layers.

If you glance at the Empire’s leadership, there were very little processes involved in building the leadership DNA.

It was pretty much Darth Vader and the Emperor who ruled (after they wiped out all other leaders along the way).

The Jedi Rebels, on the other hand, not only had a leadership development process, but their leadership continuity was being built at all levels. When there was a gap, as we saw in *Episode IV*, Master Yoda steps in to train young Luke Skywalker.

The Jedi Council itself spent an enormous amount of time on leadership development issues. Even at the stage of young Padawans (akin to management trainees at organisations), the Council reviewed each applicant and measured progress.

And there is a clear mentor-mentee system to ensure all young Jedi are given leadership exposure and coaching. In *Episode I: Phantom Menace*, young Obi-Wan is sent by the Council on a diplomatic mission to Naboo accompanied by his Jedi Master Qui-Gon Jinn.

If you look at all the top organisations in the world, a key part of their success is leadership.

In fact, many problems of the world and even in our country are related to lack of leadership. And it is not only leadership at the echelons of power, but across the organisations.

We see so many organisations fail to grow and fulfil its potential because its middle management fail to be great managers. Great leaders and managers are needed at every organisational level. It is very hard work to develop and grow leaders at each level.

Yet, if you do, and even if one of the leaders you develop decides to jump ship (as Anakin did), you must never lose faith. It is much better to have developed countless leaders and lose some of them than to have no leaders. Organisations with great leadership DNA always bounce back.

The chief executive officer (CEO) and senior leader of an organisation must be personally committed to “building world class leaders.”

If you get lip service from the CEO and leadership team that they are committed to growing their employees, yet whenever a top talent is requested to be rotated to a new role to learn and grow, and one is

not released due to “business reasons,” you can be sure that others will also role model the leaders and you will never be able to have a real leadership infrastructure in place.

Steve Job’s personal commitment ensured the success of various campaigns at Apple. Sir Richard Branson gets involved in all Virgin’s key initiatives from day one.

Even in Malaysia, our research indicates that the most successful leaders spent significant amount of time with their talent, teaching and developing. Welch spent at least 20 days a year teaching initiatives he was championing.

#### **4. Culture**

The hardest part of any change initiative is to ensure it does not become a fad or a “flavour of the month” but to ensure that it becomes part of the organisational DNA. It requires cultural alignment.

According to Schwartz and Davis: “Organisational culture is capable of blunting or significantly altering the intended impact of even well-thought-out initiatives in an organisation.”

People and organisations are creatures of habit, and changing habits is harder than changing structures or systems. Organisations, like people, have personalities, and to ignore it will be fatal to your efforts. You need to be aware of your cultural impediments and address them.

Among them may include:

- Lack of trust or accountability between groups, including turf issues or internal competitiveness.
- An “observer-critic” culture that kills new ideas or a culture reluctant to accept new ideas.
- Groups formed under the protection of a politically connected individual which distances themselves from your initiative.

A few years ago, I was leading a global initiative to drive e-learning usage. We built programmes, got leaders championing the cause and built processes to support e-learning.

Yet, the take-up rate of e-learning was abysmal. Until we realised that culturally, e-learning was not the accepted norm.

People preferred to go for actual training classes where they got away from their offices, had coffee breaks and lunches provided and even got a certificate which they could showcase on their desk.

When on e-learning programmes, participants were often disturbed mid session by operational issues and never got about completing the learning.

To counter and address these cultural issues, we issued Starbuck's coffee vouchers for e-learning classes (in lieu of coffee breaks), we built big signboards which hung by participant's desk reading: "Student on e-learning—do not disturb me."

We even started issuing special certificates and gifts for those with high e-learning usage. Within months, e-learning took off in a big way. A corporation's culture can be its greatest strength or its greatest enemy.

In Star Wars, we see how the Empire ultimately tumbled into oblivion because it practised the wrong culture.

In *Episode V: Empire Strikes Back*, we see how Admiral Ozzel (who worked for Darth Vader) made a big mistake by taking the Imperial Fleet too close to the Hoth system, thereby allowing the Rebel Alliance to detect them and defend accordingly.

Darth Vader, upset by this “mistake” used his “Force” to choke Admiral Ozzel. Immediately after killing him, Darth Vader promoted Captain Piett, Ozzel’s second-in-command to Admiral of the Imperial Fleet. Shortly thereafter, Darth Vader choked Captain Needa when he failed to capture the Millennium Falcon. These actions immediately became the cultural “norm” for the Empire—mistakes will not be tolerated.

This culture of “fear” and those in command being punished by these mistakes soon mutated into employees in the Empire pushing their bosses to failure. After all, the fastest way to be promoted was to undermine and ensure your boss failed.

And this culture of punishing mistakes ultimately was one of the key reasons why the Rebels were able to stand a chance against the Empire. Your organisational culture is constantly evolving. If you are not intentionally designing it, someone else will.

### **Final thoughts**

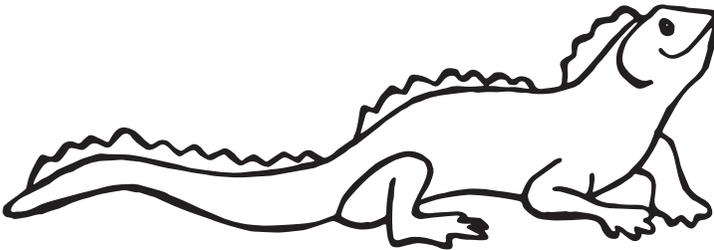
How many of these four constraints are currently obstacles to you and your organisation becoming world-class?

If only Darth Vader and the Empire understood these constraints and worked on them, the poor rebels who have been wiped up.

But thankfully, the right team worked on their culture, process, leadership and business model and managed to destroy the bad guys.

## Roshan Says:

“ Agility is one of the core requirements necessary to succeed in the 21st century. Regardless of how knowledgeable you are, if you are not agile enough to transform and change, you will end up not succeeding. The 21st century is defined by speed. Change is a constant. We see industries who have been secure for years being reshaped by innovation, technology and savvy business models. If we do not have agility to change accordingly, we risk being left behind. Lim Lay Hsuan explores the animal kingdom in her search for answers to this agility conundrum. She found Iggy the Iguana who teaches us great lessons on agility, change and transformation. Read on... ”



## Chapter 11

# Into the Wild

### What Iggy the Iguana imparted

By LIM LAY HSUAN

CALL me peculiar, but I'm sure I'm not the only one. I have a soft spot for reptiles, particularly green iguanas.

I fell in love with it when I was little, the moment I saw Pugsley, Sarah Connor's pet iguana in *Terminator*. I told myself that I'd like to own one when I grow up.

That was made possible when a few friends, who knew of my dream pet, shared the cost of buying an iguana (with license) as a surprise birthday gift!

Suddenly, I found myself with this unexpected huge responsibility of taking care of Iggy the Iguana. Nevertheless, I was determined to give my best care for him.

Beyond his head-bobbing and tail-whipping responses, Iggy was an unpredictable pet with an attitude.

In the short time that I had him, this feisty little creature taught me four key lessons that are applicable for personal development.

## **1. Be agile to face inevitable challenges<sup>1</sup>**

When Iggy sleeps in his enclosure, his positions range from a laidback style on the ground to a precarious acrobatic style on a tree branch. Iguanas are, after all, well known for their limbic agility, especially in swimming and leaping.<sup>2</sup>

One time, Iggy did a “parkour” stunt on me by jumping down from my shoulders onto the floor. Concerned if he had suffered any injury when he didn’t move for a few good seconds, he assured me he was fine when he later dashed for the nearest exit.

### ***Lesson learnt:***

The 21st century workplace environment is a volatile and challenging one. As an employee and a business entity, we are called to be quick to adapt to changes.

If we don’t upskill ourselves or embrace innovative business models, we will eventually be left behind. Worse still, we might be driven out of business and become irrelevant to our customers.

## **2. Shed the old skin to grow and move forward**

Being a juvenile and actively growing, Iggy sheds his skin often. Because an iguana’s skin comes off in patches, he sometimes has to rub himself against surfaces to get rid of the old skin.<sup>3</sup>

To facilitate his shedding, I sometimes spray his back with water to ease the process.

I bet the shedding process was uncomfortable for Iggy, but he had to go through it in order to grow. The new skin is often greener and more beautiful.

### ***Lesson learnt:***

Roshan Thiran often talks about growing pains.<sup>4</sup> In order to reach our destiny, the journey is full of storms and rough terrains.

Indefinitely, pain is part and parcel of growth before we acquire success. By persevering through seasons of pain and overcoming it, we often end up stronger and closer to our goals.

On another note, many of us carry old excess baggage of grudges and regrets. When we do that, we experience stunted growth.

Hence, we should attempt to remove our old skin and baggage, reconcile with our past and move on with total liberty. Our better future selves are waiting ahead of us.

### **3. Invest precious time to build trust**

Unlike domesticated pets, iguanas are wild animals and are not easily trusting towards humans. Naturally, Iggy sees me as a predator.<sup>5</sup>

It was a challenge to read Iggy's body language because it differed daily. At times, he sends out the "don't touch me" message by extending his dewlap, puffing up his body and opening his mouth. On good days, he is calm enough to be handled.

To build that trust, I often hand-feed him to tell him that I mean no harm. Over time, he got really excited by bobbing his head whenever he sees me bringing his favourite food—papaya!

#### ***Lesson learnt:***

It can be quite frustrating trying to build relationships that are often one way. My advice? Don't give up just yet.

Someday, people will realise that you have no hidden agenda, and are sincerely genuine in the relationship.

In a business environment, the same principle applies. Trust is earned, and you often need to work hard to bridge the missing "trust" gaps.

Once trust is established, honour and guard it with all your heart. Why? Because once trust is broken, your credibility as a leader in an organisation goes down the drain. It'll be extremely difficult to regain trust that was lost.

#### **4. Know when to retreat and bask in the sun**

There was never a dull moment watching Iggy going about his life. Being diurnal (active during the day) and arboreal (live on trees)<sup>6</sup>, it is interesting to observe how iguanas recognise when they should take baths, eat, sleep and chill.

Whenever Iggy is left on his own, he seems to enjoy chilling and basking under heat lamps, perched on his tree branch.

In those still moments, with what I often observe as a contented smirk on his face, Iggy exudes an air of Zen and peace with himself and his environment.

#### ***Lesson learnt:***

The 24/7 connectivity around us and the work-life integration we experience today are keeping us on the go all the time.

Even if we love our job so much, it is imperative that we learn to retreat from our busyness and go for vacations, or spend more time with family and loved ones.

If iguanas know how to be still and rest from labour, perhaps we can learn to do so too.

#### **Concluding thoughts**

Alas, I only had Iggy for about eight months. He died on July 3, 2008. I couldn't save him; neither could my vet.

A friend was kind enough to pen a heart-warming poem to immortalise Iggy in his first death anniversary (see accompanying poem).

Although he is no longer with me, he left me with invaluable lifetime lessons to take away.

He showed me what it is to be patient with him, and to accept him for who he is as a unique creation of the Maker.

**In ever loving memory of Iggy**

*Our time together had been short...*

*But, our lives have been colourful...*

*Cherish the memories we had...*

*For it can never be replaced.*

*And it is the most valuable treasures one can have*

*Because they only belong to you and me.*

*Fate has stolen my life away from you*

*But don't let it steal away the happiness I've brought you.*

*Grieve for me for another few more days, okay?*

*Don't grieve for me forever...*

*Always remember me.*

*And always remember I brought happiness to you.*

*Thank you for loving me*

*And thank you for having me too.*

*Love,*

*Iggy the Green Iguana*

*Lay Hsuan is an editorial coordinator with Leaderonomics who is always on the lookout for great stories.*

# Return on Luck

Roshan Says:

“ The Chinese believe that luck plays a big part in everything we do. Simultaneously, there are numerous sayings such as ‘you make your own luck.’ In the past Chinese Lunar New Year, I pondered luck in business and was amazed at learning how each of us can increase our Return on Luck (ROL). ”

## Chapter 12

# Luck is Not Luck

**You can influence your return on luck**

*By ROSHAN THIRAN*

THESE past few weeks, with the Chinese New Year celebrations coming in full swing, many friends wished me “luck” many times. Everyone was hoping for a great year with lots of “luck.”

Most believe that luck happens by chance. We believe luck is something that we cannot plan for or obtain by design. Luck is fated, written in the stars. Or is it?

I remember a conversation I had with Datuk Seri Idris Jala (formerly Minister in The Prime Minister’s Department) many years ago, and he explained the secret to his success as a leader.

He had six key points to success in leadership, and his final point was about having good luck. He did not term it “luck” but called it “divine intervention.”

He believed that we can only control about 40% of the things we work on. The remaining 60% are things beyond our control, where we have little influence.

However, Idris believed that if you are a good human being, operating with ethics and spending time in solitude and reflection, you could “influence” the divine to be on your side and bring yourself good “luck.” As I pondered on the conversation with Idris, a number of questions were triggered.

Among them: Why do some people always have all the luck, whilst others are plagued with bad fortune?

If luck was an entirely random event, surely, it would even out, and at some point, someone’s luck would run out. Yet it doesn’t seem to even out.

Could luck be more than a random occurrence and something that can be influenced?

### **Was I lucky?**

I have always felt I was extremely lucky to get a job at General Electric earlier on in my career.

My internship with them was a lucky break as my resumé happened to be on the desk of the newly hired chief recruiter on his first day at work. He needed to fill an intern slot and called me.

I felt even luckier when I was selected for an interview for the prestigious high-potential entry-level programme at the end of my internship.

However, only a handful of the 45 interns interviewed would be picked, and the interviewers were extremely tough.

I noticed many candidates coming out of these interview rooms in tears and some openly crying, especially those exiting the chief interviewer’s room. I walked into his room expecting the worst.

But to my surprise, his first question to me was, “So, you play soccer for your university?” I noticed a smile as he asked that question. I nodded and quickly continued the football conversation.

I then told him about how I had spent part of the summer going to watch live World Cup games (it was 1994 and the World Cup was in the United States that year), and he shared his experiences watching football games too.

An hour went by so quickly, and I walked out smiling after a pleasant conversation on the state of football in the US.

I was one of only three interns who got the offer. I always thought that I was extremely lucky to have caught my interviewer’s excitement for his newly adopted passion.

On the contrary, in recent conversations with a number of “luck” experts, they claimed that I might not have been merely lucky.

Was it luck? Would you agree that some people just have “all the luck” in the world?

### **Types of luck**

As a young boy, I frequently read biographies of famous people. I became a great fan of Benjamin Franklin and the third US President Thomas Jefferson.

Jefferson once declared:

*“I’m a great believer in luck, and I find the harder I work, the more I have of it.”*

Franklin similarly shared Jefferson’s belief in luck—that it had everything to do with effort.

Yet, many people work hard and still remain luckless all their lives. Surely, there has to be more than mere effort that determines luck?

Researchers Anthony K. Tjan, Richard Harrington and Tsun-yan Hsieh postulate that there are two types of luck—luck that you cannot affect (like who your parents are and your blood type, etc.) and luck that you can influence (like your business success or your career progress).

In fact, they believe that a majority of “business luck” can be influenced and it is really about understanding how. Their conclusion: “luck is about attitude as much as it is about probability.”

They found that people who describe themselves as lucky tend to be luckier because of their right attitude. They concluded that the right attitude comprised three traits—humility, intellectual curiosity, and constant optimism.

Dale Carnegie once said:

*“Happiness doesn’t depend on any external conditions—it is governed by your mental attitude.”*

Carnegie is right. As Idris accurately pointed out, if we learn to control the things that we can, including our reaction to the world around us, we may swing the luck pendulum. Our response to a disastrous occurrence is often more important than the incident in itself.

Authors John D. Krumboltz and Al S. Levin<sup>7</sup> claim that there’s no such thing as luck. They describe luck as “happenstance.”

They believe that “happenstance” isn’t something that randomly affects us but rather something we create out of the chance circumstances and encounters that run through our lives. A chanced occurrence, an unplanned meeting, or missed appointments may sometimes lead our

lives into unexpected directions that might alter it and our careers. These “happenstances” may happen frequently to everyone. The key difference between lucky people and the unlucky ones is the ability to recognise these opportunities and leverage them.

Take Bette Nesmith Graham<sup>8</sup> as an example. She was a poor woman in Dallas, supporting her small child as a single mum. She got a job as a secretary and learnt shorthand and typing to ensure she kept her job. Yet, she constantly made typing errors.

She was an artist and she recalled how artists would paint over their mistakes on canvas. So, she decided to put some tempera water-based paint in a bottle and took her watercolour brush to the office, using it to correct her typing mistakes.

Before long, her invention, which she named “liquid paper,” became a worldwide hit and she built it into a multimillion dollar corporation.

Was she lucky? Or was this the ability to recognise opportunities even in mistakes?

There were thousands of secretaries who probably went through typing error anguishes just like Graham did, yet no one viewed it as an opportunity to create a solution to their nightmare. No one can control every outcome but like Graham, leveraging our lucky breaks and taking action can increase the probability of our success.

### **Return on luck (ROL)**

Jim Collins and Morten Hansen<sup>9</sup> completed a nine-year research study of some of the most extreme business successes of modern times. They investigated the role of “luck” in these success stories.

Their conclusion: They found that both successful businesses and ineffective businesses had luck, both good and bad, in comparable amounts. Therefore, luck doesn’t cause extreme success.

Apart from that, they found something more interesting in their study. The successful companies were not lucky. Rather, they had a high ROL.

Luck has nothing to do with success. The key to success is what people do when they are hit with a lucky circumstance or situation. They take that luck and create a huge return on it. That is the key difference.

Good and bad luck happens to everyone. The constantly “lucky” people recognise this luck, seize it, and then make the most of it.

### **Top 10 ways to increase your luck**

So, how do we turn “bad luck” into an “opportunity” and how do we recognise and seize “good luck” when it happens? Here are my top 10 ways to increase your luck:

#### **1. Be a believer**

There are heaps of opportunities in life. We need to be abundant thinkers who always believe that there are amazing opportunities to leverage upon. A negative person generally is a scarce thinker, believing that all the best opportunities in the world have been taken. The theory called the Pygmalion Effect states that you get what you expect. Most “lucky” people expect the best, confident that their future is going to be great. Somehow, these expectations become self-fulfilling prophecies. Ask around and you’ll find that “lucky” and “unlucky” people have astoundingly different expectations.

#### **2. Be action bias**

Inaction is the surest path to failure. If you keep trying, you will ultimately succeed and luck will be on your side. Don’t procrastinate. Don’t be afraid to fail.

### **3. Make the most of unplanned events**

The unexpected constantly bombards us. Learn to love spontaneity and enjoy it. New opportunities may unfold when we least expect it.

### **4. Be aware**

Always ask questions and explore your surroundings. Lucky people are aware of what is happening around them and are continuously searching for opportunities.

### **5. Don't be afraid to say yes**

In the movie *Yes Man*, Jim Carrey was made to say “yes” to everything. He ended up being “lucky” by unearthing new opportunities and even met the woman of his dreams. So, say “yes” more times than you do “no.”

### **6. Never eat alone**

Building and maintaining a strong social network, including good relationships with other people is critical to success. If you love people, and love being with people, new opportunities will always appear. People provide support in times of trouble, act as resources when you need information, and most importantly, they can bring you “luck” by their valuable connections to social networks. So, make sure you limit your eating alone to one meal a day. After all, in Asia, food places are where most relationships are built.

### **7. Overcome self-sabotage**

Our greatest enemy is ourselves. Don't beat up yourself with negativity and destructive self-talk. Stop using words like “I can't” before even trying.

### **8. Be curious and don't be afraid to ask**

Take risks and ask. Curiosity doesn't kill the cat. It opens up new opportunities. Travel, try new things and don't stay in your

comfort zone. Your ROL magnifies when you identify these lucky breaks and leverage them.

### **9. Help others and ask for help**

I have learnt that the more I give of myself to others, the luckier I am. The more I give, the more blessings I receive. But don't be afraid to ask for help too. Lucky people ask for help and they reciprocate when others need help.

### **10. Pray often and do good always**

Many people turn to a greater power to help them increase their luck. Some say a prayer before they start their day for the strength and the positive attitude they need to not give up. And do good, always. As Idris reiterated to me, when you do good often, good will befall you. Karma has a way of rewarding do-gooders.

So, what is your ROL?

### **Final thoughts**

There is a popular saying “you make your own luck.”

When we see luck as something that is beyond our reach or something that we can't create, we become victims and complain about others and the world.

Reframing luck as something we may influence (regardless of how limited our influence may be) is a powerful way to move from being a hostage to being a leader.

Kyle Chandler<sup>10</sup> concludes that:

*“Opportunity does not knock; it presents itself when you beat down the door.”*

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, luck is defined as  
“a force that brings good fortune or adversity; a force that operates for  
or against an individual.”

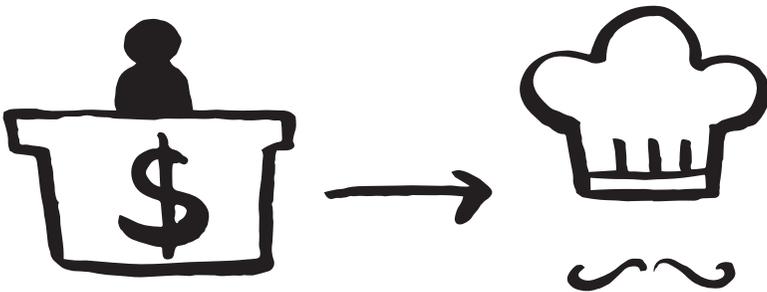
So, if luck is a force, you should be able to tap into it... at any time!  
May the Force thus be with you!

Scan the QR code to watch our video on luck.



## Roshan Says:

“ Change is never easy, especially if it entails leaving the comfortable surroundings of a Central Bank and moving into the unknown. In this article, Zoe shares his story of change. We all struggle to make these big life-changing decisions that could alter our lives, so Zoe’s story may inspire you to do likewise. ”



## Chapter 13

# Living Beyond Our Comfort Zone

**From banker to chef, one man's daring plunge**

*By ZOE RAI*

FOR most of my life, I built buffers and carved out life from a daily routine and certainty from a permanent job. This was my comfort zone. To discover new worlds, you have to first leave the safety of familiar shores and doing so is seldom an easy decision.

Sometimes, it requires not letting that loud voice of discouragement stop you. That voice is none other than one's own self-doubt. Just as moving along monkey bars, you can only move forward by first letting go of one bar as you grasp another.

All of which requires a leap of faith. The magnitude of one's leap varies depending on what is at stake. The greater the leap, the greater the faith needed. In my case, the leap was phenomenal.

For over a decade, I have worked hard at developing my career at Bank Negara. I had an extremely rewarding career that brought me immeasurable experiences, wonderful colleagues who became great friends and the privilege of working with inspirational leaders. Why then would I leave all this behind for the unknown?

### **The tussle in me**

Of course, I myself was constantly plagued with the tussle of whether I was making the right decision to change careers. I was going through a difficult period personally and wondered if that was the real reason. I was aware that making decisions based on situational factors could be regretted once the situation changes.

Talking to people also brought mixed results. For every person I spoke to, I would get a polar response. Some were extremely encouraging, while others refused to condone my decision to change careers. Some wanted to see me develop in new areas that I was inclined towards, while others did not want me to lose what I had built.

Ultimately, the decision came down to who I was and what I felt was the best for me. As new age-y as it sounds, I needed to find the centre of my being. That centre came from my fondest memories of childhood—growing up in the kitchen, watching and helping my mother.

Or rather, I was the human kitchen aid! I specialised in whisking and mixing with the ultimate reward of being able to eat the excess food left on the mixing spoon.

I felt most secure in the kitchen and cooking was my way of sharing my love and fondness with those around me.

Being a hopeless romantic, I believed that following your heart would be easy. However, it was not.

### **A new journey begins**

Upon completing my schooling at Le Cordon Bleu, I managed to gain a six-month placement at Quay, Sydney, in one of the world's top restaurants for my industrial programme module. I am no stranger to hard work, but I worked harder than I ever did in my life during those few short months.

Kitchen life is physically, mentally and emotionally demanding and I entered it at an age where most would opt for less physically demanding roles.

The average shift is about 15 to 16 hours, all of which is spent standing, and if you are able to take a 15 to 30-minute breaks, it was at 5pm to have your dinner. If you still need to prepare for dinner service, that break is foregone. There was not a single part of my body that was not in pain from utter exhaustion.

Do not even mention the cuts, bruises and burns. And I was at least 20 years older than everyone in that kitchen. But years have commodity even when it's a young man's game. This is where I used my age to my advantage. Having more maturity allowed me to tap into my inner strength.

### **Pressing on**

When it got too tough, I reminded myself to focus and would also recite William Ernest Henley's poem *Invictus*:

*"It matters not how straight the gate, how charged with punishments the scroll. I am the master of my fate: I am the captain of my soul."*

Regardless of the odds, I have never been happier. I do miss my previous life at the bank, but I am at peace now. Even though it can be complete chaos around me, and stress is everywhere, I still feel a sense of peace. That to me is an indicator that I made the right decision.

Although I have traded the pen for the pan, I brought my experience and what I learnt at the central bank to help me deal with new challenges, such as interpersonal skills and communication, time management, striving for excellence and self-motivation, self-confidence, perseverance and mental fortitude.

I am constantly in awe and wonder from being able to learn from every second spent in the kitchen, watching people cook, be it in the professional kitchen or at the humble stove of someone's home. Everyone and every experience is my teacher.

### **Keep going forward**

Living beyond one's comfort zone is never easy, but it's a decision worth making as life ultimately is made up of different experiences and new meanings. The support from close friends and family has also been instrumental in helping me get to where I am now, and to keep going forward.

I am able to not only be myself, but also share my innermost feelings with everyone around me no matter where I am with our most basic of needs, food. The unknown now does not seem as scary as when I first started on this journey. At the crossroads of my life, I did turn back to take that long abandoned route. Just as Robert Frost took the road not taken, I decided to walk back and start again and it has made all the difference for me.

*A former central banker, Zoe Rai served at Bank Negara Malaysia for 13 years before switching professions to become a chef. Trained at Le Cordon Bleu in Adelaide, Zoe is currently gaining experience at various restaurants throughout Australia.*





## Roshan Says:

“ One of my favourite columns in [www.leaderonomics.com](http://www.leaderonomics.com) is ‘Top 10’ as it breaks down the article into 10 simple steps or points. Travis Bradberry, known for being the one to break the mould, created a list of the top nine worst mistakes you can ever make at work—a quick, easy yet illuminating read. ”

## Chapter 14

# The 9 Worst Mistakes You Can Ever Make at Work

*By TRAVIS BRADBERRY*

WE have all heard of (or seen first-hand) people doing some pretty crazy things at work.

Truth is, you don't have to throw a chair through a window or quit in the middle of a presentation to cause irreparable damage to your career. No matter how talented you are or what you've accomplished, there are certain behaviours that instantly change the way people see you and forever cast you in a negative light.

The following list contains nine of the most notorious behaviours that you should avoid at all costs.

### **1. Backstabbing**

The name says it all. Stabbing your colleagues in the back, intentionally or otherwise, is a huge source of strife in the workplace. One of the most frequent forms of backstabbing is going over someone's head to solve a problem.

People typically do this in an attempt to avoid conflict, but they end up creating even more conflict as soon as the victim feels

the blade. Anytime you make someone look bad in the eyes of their colleagues, it feels like a stab in the back, regardless of your intentions.

## **2. Gossiping**

People make themselves look terrible when they get carried away with gossiping about other people. Wallowing in talk of other people's misdeeds or misfortunes may end up hurting their feelings if the gossip finds its way to them, but gossiping will make you look negative and spiteful every time, guaranteed.

## **3. Taking credit for someone else's work**

We've all experienced that stomach-dropping feeling that happens when you discover that someone has stolen your idea. Taking credit for someone else's work, no matter how small, creates the impression that you haven't accomplished anything significant on your own. Stealing credit also shows that you have zero regard for your team and your working relationships.

## **4. Emotional hijacking**

My company provides 360 degree feedback and executive coaching, and we come across far too many instances of people throwing things, screaming, making people cry, and other tell-tale signs of an emotional hijacking.

An emotional hijacking demonstrates low emotional intelligence, and it's an easy way to get fired. As soon as you show that level of instability, people will question whether or not you're trustworthy and capable of keeping it together when it counts.

Exploding at anyone, regardless of how much they might "deserve it," turns a huge amount of negative attention your way. You'll be labelled as unstable, unapproachable, and intimidating.

Controlling your emotions keeps you in the driver's seat. When you are able to control your emotions around someone who wrongs you, they end up looking bad instead of you.

### **5. Announcing that you hate your job**

The last thing anyone wants to hear at work is someone complaining about how much they hate their job. Doing so labels you as a negative person and brings down the morale of the group. Bosses are quick to catch on to naysayers who drag down morale, and they know that there are always enthusiastic replacements waiting just around the corner.

### **6. Bragging**

When someone hits a home run and starts gloating as they run the bases, it's safe to assume that they haven't hit very many home runs. On the other hand, if they hit a home run and simply run the bases, it conveys a business-as-usual mentality, which is far more intimidating to the other team.

Accomplishing great things without bragging about them demonstrates the same strong mentality—it shows people that succeeding isn't unusual to you.

### **7. Telling lies**

So many lies begin with good intentions—people want to protect themselves or someone else—but lies have a tendency to grow and spread until they're discovered, and once everyone knows that you've lied, there's no taking it back.

Getting caught up in a lie, no matter how small, is exhausting and hard on your self-esteem. You have to be authentic if you want to be happy with who you are.

## **8. Eating smelly food**

Unless you happen to work on a ship, your colleagues are going to mind if you make the entire place smell like day-old fish. The general rule of thumb when it comes to food at work is, anything with an odour that might waft beyond the kitchen door should be left at home.

It might seem like a minor thing, but smelly food is inconsiderate and distracting—and so easily avoidable. When something that creates discomfort for other people is so easily avoided, it tends to build resentment quickly. Your pungent lunch tells everyone that you just don't care about them, even when you do.

## **9. Burning bridges**

So much of work revolves around the people you meet and the connections you make. Dropping an atomic bomb on any professional relationship is a major mistake.

One of TalentSmart's clients is a large chain of coffee shops. They have a relatively high turnover, so when a barista quits, it isn't usually taken personally. One barista, however, managed to burn every single bridge she had in a single day. The surprising thing is that she didn't yell or do anything extreme; all she did was leave.

Without warning, she showed up to her Monday shift, told the store manager she was quitting (she had found a better-paying job somewhere else), and walked out. The result, of course, was that every shift that she was scheduled to work for the next two weeks had to be done with one less person, as she provided no time to find a replacement.

She most likely saw her actions as being offensive only to the manager (whom she didn't like), but in reality, she created two

miserable weeks for everyone who worked at the shop. She ruined her otherwise positive connections, with every single one of her colleagues.

### **Bringing it all together**

These behaviours sound extreme and highly inconsiderate, but they have a tendency to sneak up on you. A gentle reminder is a great way to avoid them completely.

*Travis Bradberry is the award-winning co-author of the #1 bestselling book, Emotional Intelligence 2.0, and the cofounder 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. Bradberry has written for, or been covered by, Newsweek, BusinessWeek, Fortune, Forbes, Fast Company, Inc., USA Today, The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post, and The Harvard Business Review.*

## Roshan Says:

“ [www.leaderonomics.com](http://www.leaderonomics.com) features leadership lessons from television and film in our column *Movie Wisdom*. While the focus is often on the main characters, this piece by Jasmine Chuah spotlights a character who started off looking like the bad guy but became an unanticipated beacon for good. Jasmine beautifully highlights the beauty of the ever complex Severus Snape. ”



## Chapter 15

# 10 Shades of Severus Snape

**The mind is a complex and many-layered thing, Potter...  
or at least, most minds are...**

*By JASMINE CHUAH*

SEVERUS Snape of the *Harry Potter* series has always been a character of dubious stance and till today, continues to be a hot topic for debate among readers. Nevertheless, whether he was firmly of the light or questionably in the dark, there is no doubt that his story holds many lessons and that they are buried in each of the layers that make up the mind-blowing character that is Snape.

Here, we take a closer look at the Hogwarts potions master.

### **1. Lily Evans**

*“After all this time?”*

*“Always,” said Snape.*

It is undeniable that the main motivation of most of Snape’s actions was his love for Lily Evans, Harry Potter’s mother. After all, she was the reason for his protection over Harry. Her death was also the main reason for Snape’s eventual involvement in the destruction of the Dark Lord, Voldemort.

***Lesson learnt:*** Doing things out of love, however small that love is, will always work for the greater good.

## 2. Half-Blood Prince

*“You dare use my own spells against me, Potter? It was I who invented them—I, the Half-Blood Prince!”*

Snape pays homage to his heritage by calling himself the “half-blood Prince” in his copy of *Advanced Potion Making*. The name is something that burdens him as much as it brings comfort. It is both a reminder that he is in a distant way a pure-blood, by way of his mother’s line, as well as a self-recognition of his intelligence which is demonstrated throughout the spells written in the sides of the pages as well as the effective changes made to recipes in the book.

**Lesson learnt:** Your past does not make your present, you have a say in who you become.

## 3. Slytherin

*“No,” agreed Dumbledore. You are a braver man by far than Igor Karkaroff. You know, I sometimes think we sort too soon . . .” He walked away, leaving Snape looking stricken.*

Slytherin was instrumental in the formation of Snape’s character. It was in this house that he learnt the dark arts and ascended to greatness. He probably even had many friends there and eventually joined with them in the service of Voldemort. Strangely enough, as the Slytherin house teacher, he later demonstrates the quality of a Gryffindor: courage.

**Lesson learnt:** You don’t have to conform to your environment; you have the power to change it through your character.

## 4. Death Eater

The main lure of being a Death Eater was power over the general populace: non-pure-bloods in particular. It was probably because he didn’t want to lose that sense of belonging. Unfortunately, it took him down a dark path.

**Lesson learnt:** Whatever you do, the higher moral ground is always better.

## 5. Traitor

*“The—the prophecy . . . the prediction . . . Trelawney . . .”*

*“Ah, yes. How much did you relay to Lord Voldemort?”*

*“Everything—everything I heard! That is why—it is for that reason—he thinks it means Lily Evans!”*

One of Snape’s biggest turning points is his unintentional betrayal of Lily, Harry’s mother, which resulted in him reporting back to Voldemort on the prophecy. Voldemort then sought to hunt and kill Lily and family. The crisis would have been completely averted if not for Pettigrew who betrayed the location of Lily and family. Snape never really recovered from the guilt of being the initial cause.

**Lesson learnt:** Ambition, when taken one step too far can be the cause of downfall, including your own.

## 6. Hero

*“My word, Severus, that I shall never reveal the best of you?”*

Motivated by a combination of love for Lily and guilt over being the initial traitor, Snape began seeking retribution from the day she died. He renounced allegiance to Voldemort and began assisting Dumbledore in his dual quest of protecting Harry and destroying the Dark Lord. He was a double agent before Harry was born, and died as the final cog in a complicated plan to destroy Voldemort. All the while, only Dumbledore knew.

**Lesson learnt:** It doesn’t matter if you don’t get recognised now, recognition will come eventually; it always does.

## 7. Potions Master

*“I don’t expect you will really understand the beauty of the softly simmering cauldron with its shimmering fumes, the delicate power of liquids that creep through human veins, bewitching the mind, ensnaring the senses . . .”*

Snape always wanted to be the Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher, but was never allowed to leave the role of Potions Master till Harry’s sixth year. I think it was a direct reflection of his character. Snape, no matter how much he wanted to fight openly against the Dark Arts could not do so due to his role as a double agent. However, he was the subtler panacea and poison for the situation and that was very much reflected in his role as potions master.

**Lesson learnt:** Sometimes, being on the frontline doesn’t really help the situation at all; it’s okay to be a follower, just be an awesome one.

## 8. James Potter

James Potter, even in death, was an enormous influence on Snape. In life, James was his main motivation to become powerful. In death, James had left a legacy: his son, Harry. James was the ultimate root of conflict within Snape’s character: every time he had to protect Harry, it felt like protecting his former bully. It says a lot about Snape’s character because Harry never came to any harm at his hands. It also says a lot about the weakness of Snape’s character which allowed Harry and his friends to suffer a lot.

**Lesson learnt:** Don’t let the past distract you, it might be in the way of your own development.

## 9. Dumbledore’s man

Draco to Dumbledore: *“He’s a double-agent, you stupid old man, he isn’t working for you, you just think he is!”*

*“We must agree to differ on that, Draco. It so happens that I trust Professor Snape.”*

It was Dumbledore that Snape ran to when he accidentally betrayed Lily. It was Dumbledore who gave him that much needed second chance and Snape proved himself all the way: Dumbledore knew Snape best and trusted him most, even with his own death. Because of that chance, Snape grew to be a better man.

***Lesson learnt:*** Don't be afraid to give someone a second chance, you never know when it might be their turning point.

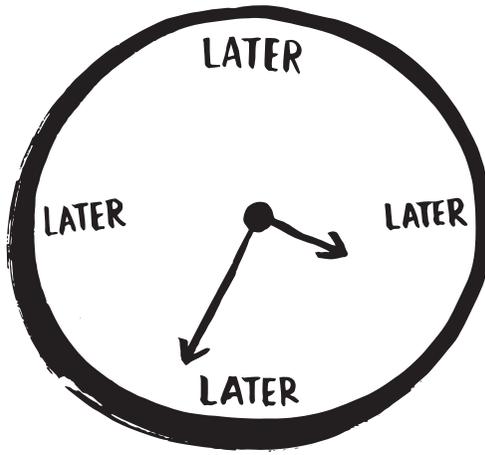
## **10. Courageous**

*“Don't—!” screamed Snape, and his face was suddenly demented, inhuman, as though he was in as much pain as the yelping, howling dog stuck in the burning house behind them “CALL ME COWARD!”*

To the very end, Snape was just that: Courageous. He had the courage to stand between two of the most powerful wizards of his time as a double agent and to choose love, even a long-gone love, over bitterness.

***Lesson learnt:*** Courage is doing the right thing even though it's hard. Do it.

*Jasmine does not like Snape on principle but grudgingly admits that his character is one of the best ones in the Hogwarts universe due to his conflicted make-up and actions. To this day, she still wonders what would have happened had Lily fallen for Snape and whether the Marauders held their own Triwizard tournament.*



## Roshan Says:

“ Everyone procrastinates sometimes. In fact, throughout history, people have been procrastinating. A text I read from the *Chapters of the Fathers* or *Pirkei Avot* (in Hebrew), a collection of Jewish ethical teachings compiled around 200 CE discusses procrastination. The text repeatedly advises readers not to put off important duties. Another text from 100 BC states, “Do not say, ‘When I am free I will study, for perhaps you will not become free.’” When I was younger, I would always justify my procrastinations by saying that I work better under pressure. But in reality, it was just my way of putting things off. Stephanie Ling brings you the bright side of this—that it’s possible to overcome procrastination. Read on. ”

## Chapter 16

# The Procrastinator

**How to stop putting off what you need to get done**

*By STEPHANIE LING*

YOU know you're procrastinating when you find the houseplant in front of you more interesting than your 20-page essay that is due the following week. Let me start by saying that I have yet to win the war against procrastination, and that is probably why this article was handed in just days before its deadline.

On a serious note however, procrastination is not something to be trivialised. It is ultimately a problem with self-regulation, with the emphasis being on self-control. A good point to note is that procrastination is something learnt rather than something you are born with—therefore it is possible to overcome this habit, albeit with some effort and willpower.

### **Procrastinators unite**

Everyone procrastinates to a different degree, be it in terms of severity or cause. The first possible reason for why people engage in procrastination would be due to the fact that these individuals are thrill-seekers. In other words, they thrive on that euphoric rush obtained when rushing to the last minute to beat a deadline.

They are the kind of individuals who feel that this final dash is what being productive is all about.

On another note, there are those who practise self-handicapping. Called “avoiders,” they are the kind who fear disappointment or even attainment. They would rather others think of them as unwilling to put in the effort rather than to be incapable of completing the task.

*“When faced with two equally tough choices, most people choose the third choice—to not choose.” —Jarod Kintz*

Lastly, it would be in terms of the decisional procrastinators who merely can’t make decisions. When they do not make decisions, the repercussions are not theirs either.

So now that we’ve gotten to know about this ordeal and its culprits, let’s talk about how we can fix it. Next are a few things we can do to ensure that we do not procrastinate and instead we get the job done.

### **1. Make work bite-sized**

Often times we procrastinate because the task at hand appears to be too overwhelming to be dealt with.

Take a step back and break down each task into more manageable sections. We will then be able to put more emphasis on each small step rather than to dwell and be bogged down by the project’s entirety on a bigger scale.

Once you enjoy and reward yourself for the little accomplishments, you are likelier to finish the task in the long run.

### **2. Time-bound timeline**

We always assume that we have plenty of time to get things done and because of that we tend to postpone completing anything. Creating a to-do list with deadlines in tow ensures that we are constantly reminded of the call to action with relation to the urgency required for each task.

With that said, any task that is put off, due to its low priority on the list, will demonstrate one's ability to prioritise rather than an inability to avoid procrastination.

### **3. Reward yourself**

Always reward yourself for completing that to-do list within the given deadline. Positive reinforcement serves as a good motivator be it that five-minute dance party or even that chocolate bar in the fridge that you've been eyeing.

Celebrate the little successes and remember how good it made you feel to have accomplished it so that you will always have something to remember in the future when you are facing roadblocks again.

### **4. Eliminate pit stops**

Put on some noise-cancelling headphones, turn off social media notifications and put that good book aside.

Use apps that help you focus by restricting the number of hours you are allowed to spend on social media. Learn to exercise self-control to ensure that you do not stray from the task at hand.

### **5. Find a buddy**

If personal accountability is a problem, find a friend who is able to keep you on track.

Friends do make or break you, so get one who is able to inspire and encourage you rather than one who puts you down.

This person should also have personal goals so you will be able to hold each other answerable for your respective projects.

If you wanted to take it to the next level, you could also make your intentions public. This serves as additional motivation as you would want to avoid being chastised by others.

## **6. Just do it**

The best way to get something done is really to begin. When self-regulation fails, it is usually because short-sightedness takes precedence over our long-term goals.

When an unappealing task is presented to us, we typically seek immediate emotional reprieve by putting it off in order to feel better instantly.

Rather than to give in to that momentary relief, we should stand our ground and push on. Always remember that the negative emotions will eventually pass so embrace it and use it as inspiration instead.

*“Only put off until tomorrow what you are willing to die having left undone.”* —Pablo Picasso

## **7. Clarify expectations**

In addition to making your task concrete, it is also essential to reduce uncertainties and distractions.

When a task is too vague, we tend to avoid tackling it. That is why it is important to clear these doubts early on so we are able to get some structure and direction towards solving them.

## **8. Create that environment**

It is also important to create a conducive environment. Being mindful about distractions and making an effort to tune them out allows for you to self-regulate and focus better.

## **9. Motivation**

Should I watch that episode of *Game of Thrones* now or should I finish up my pending proposal? Seems like a no-brainer, but that is when the irrational side of human nature steps in to throw us off.

As humans, we tend to engage in temporal discounting which is the act of pursuing a reward that may be small but is more immediate rather than larger rewards that are only available in the distant future.

With self-awareness, we know to focus on the bigger picture instead and that will result in increased productivity.

### **Concluding thoughts**

With reference to Shia LaBeouf's video that is making rounds on the Internet, he urges us over and over again to "Just Do It!" Recall the times you had wished that you had started earlier. Today, you have that chance to do just that, so why don't you?

With greater awareness of the problem as well as means for self-control, your procrastination woes can be managed.

*Stephanie Ling is part of Leaderonomics Youth. Her personal passion lies in developing all-rounded youth who are able to impact their communities. Occasionally, she can be seen engaging in sun salutations and headstand poses during her leisure time.*

Suffering  
= Success

Roshan Says:

“ I must have had a torturous year. As I look back, many of my articles hit on pain and suffering. In this article, I try to look at how Spider-Man and the Avengers cope with pain and suffering and some of the lessons we can learn from their pain. Surprisingly, one of the least covered aspects of leadership is the suffering and pain that leaders go through. Yet, this very pain and suffering are prerequisites for great leadership. ”

## Chapter 17

# Suffering = Success?

**Spider-Man and the Avengers show us that pains do lead to gains**

*By ROSHAN THIRAN*

MY most favourite superhero of all time has to be the Amazing Spider-Man. Early in his life, he loses both his parents and is adopted by Uncle Ben and Aunt May. As a young man, Peter Parker went through a tumultuous time. He was a Grade A “geek.” Being skinny and weak, he was constantly bullied by the high school star, Flash Thompson.

Even after Peter is bitten by a radioactive spider and gets super powers, his pain lingers. Uncle Ben dies partly due to his lack of “taking responsibility” to stop a crime, and later his girlfriend Gwen Stacy’s father, New York City Police detective captain George Stacy is accidentally killed during a battle between Spider-Man and Doctor Octopus (Issue #90, November 1970).

Gwen, the one person he truly loves, dies too when the Green Goblin throws her off the tower of a bridge (Issue #121, June 1973). What is more painful for Peter is the autopsy report of her death, which concludes that, *“It saddens us to say that the whiplash effect she underwent when Spider-Man’s webbing stopped her so suddenly was, in fact, what killed her.”*

Peter Parker is a man constantly in pain. Yet, in spite of the constant pain and suffering throughout his life, he somehow succeeds in never letting it distract him from his mission and goal in life—helping everyone.

Interestingly, the same scenario plays out with each of the Avengers. In fact, almost every superhero in the Marvel universe went through some form of trauma and suffering before morphing into a mighty being. Captain America had to overcome the death of his buddy “Bucky,” whose death he felt personally responsible for.

Hawkeye, born Clint Barton, lost his parents at a young age and was in an orphanage for six years before running away. He was beaten and left for dead when he “caught” his mentor The Swordsman embezzling money and later, in his first superhero outing, he was falsely accused of being a criminal. These traumatic moments could easily have swayed Hawkeye but he persevered and soldiered on.

The Hulk, Natasha Romanoff a.k.a. the Black Widow, and Ironman Tony Stark each have different stories but have also had numerous traumatic and painful moments in the early part of their lives that defined who they become. As I read the development of these superheroes, a startling realisation dawned on me—suffering and pain seems to be a prerequisite for success. Is this the same in real life?

### **Suffering = Success**

As I researched this equation, with little faith of finding research backing this hypothesis, I was surprised to find more than two decades of research from Warwick in England to The University of North Carolina postulating that the majority of trauma survivors report “*some degree of positive change.*” I can attest to this fact too—most of the great influential leaders that I have come across have one commonality—they have gone through much suffering and pain in their lives. And this pain has in no way detracted them but rather has made them better leaders.

Interestingly, millions of successful people have built “successful empires” from the ashes of defeat. Soichiro Honda’s workshop and factory were totally destroyed in the war. He rebuilt. Again a bomb destroyed his factory. He built it again. Countless times, bad luck sought him. Yet, each “bad karma” enabled him to rebuild better. Honda never took his pain and suffering as defeat but rather an opportunity to start again. In the book *Leadership Pain*, Dr. Sam Chand says, “*There is no growth without change, no change without loss, and no loss without pain. Bottom line is: if you’re not hurting, you’re not leading.*” So, is pain a prerequisite for good leadership?

### **Pain and suffering**

Why is pain and suffering so powerful in the leadership journey? C.S. Lewis states, “*We can ignore even pleasure. But pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our consciences, but shouts in our pains. It is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.*” According to Lewis, we get clarity in pain. When in pain, our priorities become clear. We see the world in different lenses. Pain helps us hear our deep convictions.

Leadership usually begins in solitude and reflection. It begins with a clear vision for ourselves. Pain enables us to achieve this state. Wes Furlong, in his article “What makes a leader truly inspiring?” wrote, “*It’s the personal narrative behind their leadership that makes the difference. Inspiring leadership is undeniably biographical. ‘Why’ they lead and ‘where’ they’re going is firmly embedded in what has happened to them. We see the transformation in their lives and the vision that rises from their struggle, and find ourselves resonating with their story and joining their journey from what is to what should be.*”

We may hate to admit it but our painful experiences define us. If you have a conversation with billionaires, they will tell you about the many sleepless nights they had working through issues. Every great

leader I have interviewed tells me about their mistakes and painful interventions they had to take to become the leader they are today. And every weekend when I get into the football pitch, I recount the numerous horrendous training sessions, abuses and correction from my coaches I went through to get here. The life story of many successful men and women are littered with painful experiences.

Finally, the word “pain” has its roots in the word “passion.” Interestingly, whenever I met great CEOs and leaders, they all have a sense of passion about what they do and the organisations they lead. Many CEOs’ passions came from their hope of transcending pain and overcoming suffering. Howard Schultz’s passion for building Starbucks came from seeing his father’s painful death. Honda’s passion was ignited after being rejected by Toyota. You too may find your passion through pain.

### **Embracing pain**

So, clearly pain is an important component of leadership. My son constantly reminds me, “no pain, no gain.” But the problem is most of us are hardwired to avoid pain at all costs. Pain, suffering, problems and risks are something we run away from not run toward. It is much easier to hear about other people’s pain and rejoice in their success but when it comes to us, we prefer to back down.

It is very natural for all of us to avoid getting hurt. Yet, we cannot be a better leader without some body blows. As our natural inclination is to avoid pain, maybe we can learn from the Avengers on how they learnt to embrace pain.

Each of the Avengers, from Black Widow to Captain America had to endure tremendous painful life episodes. Yet, instead of wilting and running away, they reframed their beliefs. This powerful methodology of believing that pain is good, enabled them to continue their growth process, both as individuals and later going through more initial painful

episodes as a team before embracing the pain of working together as a team.

The starting point of embracing pain is to rewire our beliefs on it. If we believe pain and suffering are negative elements, we end up with a clear agenda to avoid it. However, if we reframe our belief that every suffering that you go through gives you “new” lessons to be learnt, we view pain positively. Suffering also yields new experiences that will later enable us to understand situations and connect the dots better, both in our personal lives and in business. Pain is a means to achieving our potential. It prepares us for bigger and better opportunities that will come our way. Like gold being refined, our pain and suffering is refining us to our sparkling best.

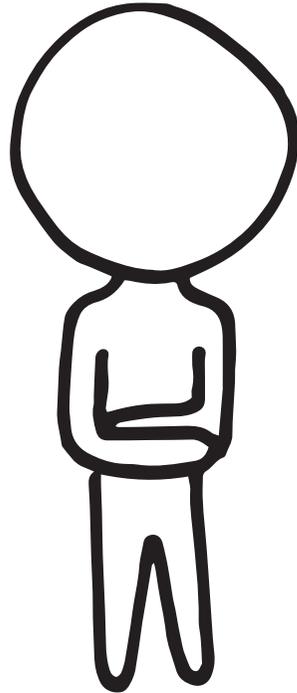
Another way is to stack all your painful experiences upfront. Behavioural scientists discovered that an effective way to create a pleasurable experience is to ensure the painful parts of the experience are arranged at the start of it. For example, if you are having a conversation with a customer, and we start with the bad news and finish on a high, the meeting will be a success. The same thing happens in our suffering. Suffer as much upfront and the entire painful episode may end up being viewed positively by us.

### **Final thoughts**

So how does this apply to you? Think about the trials and suffering in your life right now. Are you struggling? Do you feel like backing off and running away from them? That would be the easiest thing to do. The better thing to do is to reframe your thinking about that. Will you be able to learn lessons from them? Will going through them make you a better person? Will this turbulent time in your life enable you to be refined as gold is when it is burnt? If so, fight on and keep embracing the pain. After all, if Spider-Man and the Avengers managed to become better superheroes by going through the fires of pain, surely you will become a better leader if you too embrace the joys of suffering. Suffer on!

## Roshan Says:

“ Managing employees is a thankless task. No one ever gets it right. There will always be an employee who hates you regardless of how hard you try. Elisa Dass, who runs the Leadership Development segment at Leaderonomics shares with you some of her challenges and some tips on how you may just win this war against talent. ”



## Chapter 18

# Managing Difficult Talent

*By ELISA DASS AVIN*

TALENT can easily be one of the most overused words these days in the human resources (HR) industry. With almost every other company having a talent programme, those not in the programme, especially the bosses of these talents, may find that having a talent in the department can be a blessing or a curse.

Many companies invest time to structure a framework for talent programmes, trainings, projects, remuneration and branding, in a bid to make it most relevant to their company. However, most of the time, they forget a very key element to successful implementation—training and preparing the people managing the talent.

As HR focuses on hiring or identifying the right high-potential candidates, the same spotlight needs to be turned on to the bosses of the talents.

Unfortunately, a usual brief introduction to the programme does not suffice. More often than not, managers eventually come to realise that the high performers are of a different breed. They may deliver more in quantity and quality but at the same time, they demand more too—challenging projects, attention, strategic guidance, rewards and time.

Research conducted by Profiles International with over 700 people managers reported that more than half of the respondents surveyed

claimed that 25% of talents in their organisation were difficult to work with.

Sadly, the research reveals that 68% of managers did not understand the behaviours of these “difficult” talents and 78% managers did not know how to manage these employees effectively.

I recently met a head of HR whose company had run a talent programme for almost 15 years. Amidst the positive contribution most talents have brought to the organisation, she shared with me some talent woes that are not uncommon.

These are mainly statements made about talents by their bosses and peers.

*“This person has a horrible attitude!”*

*“This person is not as impressive as I thought her to be!”*

*“The talent in my team is taking up too much of my time. It’s not worth it.”*

In response, let’s try to understand these talents a little bit more by looking into whether they fall into any of these three categories: the Diva Talent, the Wallpaper Talent and the Taxing Talent.

### **1. The Diva Talent**

The Diva Talent thinks that by the very virtue that he is in the programme, it makes him a class above the rest—including his boss. As such, this diva makes it a point to ensure everyone acknowledges him as the smartest in the room.

He speaks arrogantly, constantly tries to prove others wrong and usually highlights how much he has done and how great he is. He believes he is entitled to some unspoken privileges, such as shorter work hours, longer lunch breaks and being excused from boring routine tasks required of

everyone in the team. His best compliment is probably the unspoken intimidation or ill-perceived admiration he senses from others in the room, especially from his boss.

More often than not, this attitude stems from a lack of self-assurance that he is good enough and he needs to be reassured by constant praise. He may start “announcing” his achievements repeatedly in a subtle way.

### ***Tips for managers of Diva Talents***

Sometimes the Divas’ self-perception of them being better than the rest could actually be quite accurate. However, the attitude that comes with it may leave a bad taste in the department and may come to a point where it needs to be addressed.

Avoid this by having a personal chat with the talent as he joins the team. The Diva essentially is looking for the best candidate to earn his respect. As he joins your team, establish your role and authority in a non-threatening way.

Gain his respect by showing that you are not intimidated by him and at the same time, you do not think any lesser of him. Make it clear from the beginning that you do not tolerate bad or counterproductive attitudes in your team.

If the Diva’s attitude starts affecting the team, sit him down and speak to him in a firm, yet non-condescending manner. Announce his achievements privately or publicly, and appreciate him without putting the person on a pedestal.

## **2. The Wallpaper Talent**

The Wallpaper Talent is also conscious that he is in an elite programme and everyone is watching! A trainer I once knew told a group of talent programme candidates: “You will be working in a fish bowl. Everyone’s

watching you, including those not in your department, waiting to spot a flaw.”

To avoid being judged negatively, the Wallpaper Talent tries really hard to fit in, and hopes to go about his work without any limelight, hoping that he can quietly impress his boss without rocking the boat with his colleagues. He befriends his colleagues and speaks their lingo. He goes about his work excellently without wanting to look like he is trying too hard. He maintains status quo without taking on large projects. He tries hard not to outshine others although he hopes that his boss will notice all the subtle extras that he is doing.

Unfortunately, at some point he tries too hard and suppresses his drive for challenges and excellence that first qualified him to be in the programme.

### *Tips for managers of Wallpaper Talents*

If you start wondering what’s so special about your talent, then it’s time to revisit why you agreed to have him in the first place. There must have been certain qualities, skills, attitude and aptitude that resonated with you.

Have a talk with your Wallpaper Talent and reaffirm him of his strengths and challenge him to give his best. Be clear and specific in what your expectations are of him in the next couple of months. Schedule periodical reviews and make yourself available for additional guidance if required. Praise him in front of the team. With the Wallpaper Talent, you can shine the limelight on him in a positive manner.

### **3. The Taxing Talent**

The Taxing Talent demands your time and attention at all times. His performance is no longer as good as before. He strolls in late, seems disinterested with new challenges or even current work. He only does enough to obtain the required performance rating.

### ***Tips for managers of Taxing Talents***

Have a one-to-one chat. This time, more as a friend instead of a boss. Your main objective is to find out why this talent is demotivated.

There are a few reasons why a talent can be demotivated:

- Feels that his previous effort and time invested is not rewarded up to his expectation.
- His job is getting boring. There's no more challenge to it.
- A mismatch of job or industry.

In response to this, as a manager, you have a few options on how to manage this talent:

- Explain how rewards are justified in your company. Set goals. If he wants to gain XYZ award, explain what exactly is expected of him.
- Challenge him to initiate a project that interests him and reward him for it.
- If there's a mismatch, be ready to allow him to move on to the next job. Help him through this time of search.

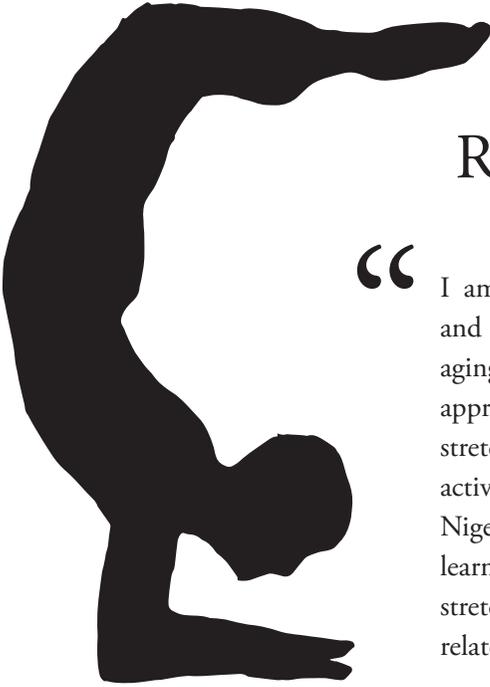
### **Concluding thoughts**

In essence, as a manager of a difficult talent, it takes one-to-one engagement to iron things out.

For the talent, I think this quote sums it up well:

*“Your talent determines what you can do. Your motivation determines how much you are willing to do. Your attitude determines how well you do it.”*

*Elisa was once identified as a high potential in a leading conglomerate in Malaysia. She believes that developing managers of talent is as important as developing talents for organisations.*



## Roshan Says:

“

I am a pretty athletic person and still am. Yet, as I start aging, I begin to be much more appreciative of the power of stretching before any sporting activity. In this delightful piece, Nigel Teh shares lessons he has learnt from his experience of stretching and yoga, and how it relates to leadership.

”

## Chapter 19

# Leadership's a Stretch

By NIGEL TEH

I remember the first time I stepped onto a yoga mat—it was like a portal to a place where people, mostly women with slender nymph-like figures, were able to twist themselves into shapes of pretzels, and where they spoke a language I could not understand.

*“Namaste. What?”*

Being one of the few males in class was definitely awkward and foreign to me. It made me feel like a fish out of water. Being a beginner and starting from scratch was a huge challenge. Nonetheless, with a year of consistent practice, I'm surprised at how far I've come and how much more I can stretch myself.

My practice mat has grown beyond the classroom into everyday life, and I'm beginning to see how the essence of yoga can guide one's personal and leadership journey. Here are five lessons on leadership that I've learnt from the mat and beyond:

### **1. Leadership is one mindful decision after another**

In these days of digital technology where everything moves at breakneck speed, leaders are faced with the challenge of keeping up with changes, whether it's within the organisation or on a macro level in the market.

Our day-to-day lives are dictated by packed schedules with meetings to catch and people to meet, leaving a tendency for us to become used to the mindlessness of the daily grind. This then leads to increased stress that affects the quality of our work and relationships.

In yoga, we are encouraged to be mindful and intentional about our words and actions—acknowledging each moment that we're in. Whether it's a business meeting with a client or giving feedback to an employee, our conscious effort to be present and to really listen may just be the greatest gift we can offer as leaders.

Mark Bertolini, chief executive officer of Aetna introduced yoga and meditation in his organisation as a measure to boost employee well-being. As the old adage goes, a happy worker is a productive worker.

## **2. Everything is about practice, even leadership**

When I first started yoga, bending over and touching my toes seemed like an impossible goal. Leadership is both a science and an art; hence, like any learnable skill, it can be sharpened through consistent practice and perseverance.

Malcolm Gladwell famously said that elite performers and those who rise to the top of their game have spent roughly 10,000 hours at their craft. Of course, the blood, sweat and tears come packaged as part of the process towards excellence.

When J.K. Rowling wrote her first *Harry Potter* book, it was rejected by 12 different publishers. The small publishing house Bloomsbury, who purchased her manuscript, even told Rowling to “get a day job.” Had she taken their advice and threw in the towel, we may have missed out on some magic.

Many individuals had to persevere through the pain of learning, unlearning and relearning before emerging as great leaders in their field.

### **3. Discover and curate your own leadership style**

*Hatha yoga. Ashtanga yoga. Vinyasa yoga.* Just as there are many styles of yoga, there are just as many styles of leadership.

There is no model of leadership that can fit perfectly and be applied across all organisations, communities and cultures. The best leaders are aware of their own style of leadership and are able to adapt this style situationally to put it into effective practice.

In a world saturated with media spotlights on high profile leaders, it is common for us to fall into the trap of thinking that great leaders are razor-sharp, extroverted and outspoken figures like Steve Jobs.

What worked for Jobs may not necessarily work for us.

When leaders are well-acquainted and comfortable with their own style, they unintentionally extend the same feeling of ease to their followers, and this enables everyone to perform at their natural best.

### **4. Practice makes purpose, not perfect**

Leaders are not built in a day and excellence is not achieved with an hour's work. The road to success is often paved with challenges and difficulties that will tempt us to give up, raise the white flag and retreat to our comfort zone where it's nice and safe.

As evolved as we are as human beings, our behaviours are still strongly governed by our lizard brain—the primitive part of the

brain influenced by emotions and our call to arms in a fight-or-flight response.

Fear, shame and uncertainty shake us off our trajectory sometimes, thus for any leader to show grit and keep to his or her goals is no easy feat.

In yoga practice, the goal is not to realise perfection but to find a purpose. When our tight muscles are reeling from the pain of stretches and screaming for us to let go, a clarity of the ultimate goal is what keeps us from giving up the practice.

How about leadership? What is the higher purpose that drives our motivation to keep going come rain or shine?

When it comes down to it, a leader with a clear *raison d'être* will likely be the one who sees things through to the end.

## **5. Authenticity wins**

The practice of yoga encourages us to show up and reveal our true selves in order to form a genuine connection with everything around us.

Yoga is a work-in rather than a workout, and it leads us to explore our strengths and vulnerabilities. After spending decades researching human emotions such as courage, shame, worthiness and vulnerability, Professor Brené Brown at the University of Houston sums it up by arguing that leadership has nothing to do with position, salary or number of direct reports.

By now, we've seen it all. We are sick and tired of empty promises and fancy talk. Brown believes that “across the private and public

sector, in schools and in our communities, we are hungry for authentic leadership—we want to show up, we want to learn and we want to inspire and be inspired . . .”

Having power does not automatically make one a leader, but our highest power and most influential selves can only be achieved when we align who we are with what we do.

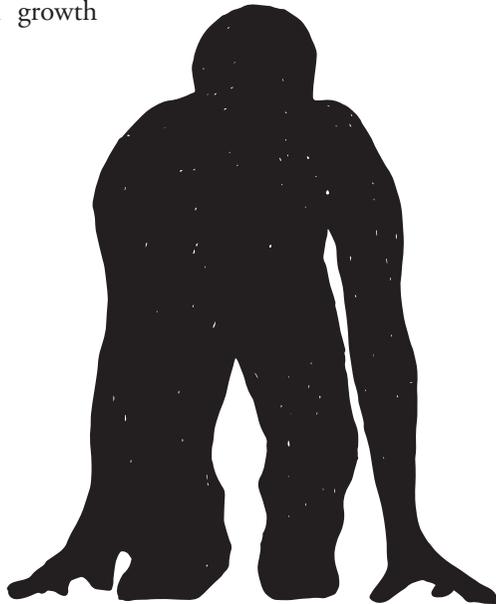
I will end with this quote from Maya Angelou:

*“Success is liking yourself, liking what you do and liking how you do it.”*

*Nigel is a curious explorer of the landscape of life. His days are defined by the sheer joy of many questions to ponder. He believes that his background in psychology is a useful addition to his exploration toolkit.*

## Roshan Says:

“ Dinesh Dorai Raj is one of the many talented employees at Leaderonomics. At 20, Dinesh was involved in a deadly car accident just as he was about to enter his senior year of college. In this story of true grit, Dinesh talks about how he is getting back on his feet, and how grit plays a huge role in his personal growth and recovery. ”



## Chapter 20

# How I Learnt to Walk and Live Again

*By DINESH DORAI RAJ*

NEARLY five years ago, I was a typical student at the age of 20 with plenty of dreams. I was supposed to leave for the United Kingdom to complete my final year of studies. This new phase of life had me exhilarated. I didn't know that in a second, my life would change.

That fateful day back in June 2010, I was driving home when I was in a wretched car crash. Surviving despite the extent of the injuries was an amazing miracle to begin with. I suffered a brain concussion, fractured ribs that led to two punctured lungs, and a ruptured, dislocated spine that resulted in an injured spinal cord, leaving me unconscious in the ICU (intensive care unit) for some time.

Somehow, I survived the tragedy and when I gained consciousness a week later, I went through long hours of invasive surgeries. Unfortunately, I was left paralysed.

I believed at the time that I was very strong mentally, emotionally and physically, but medical practitioners were very certain that I would remain permanently paralysed for the rest of my life. My future looked pitch black. I could only see my world crashing down in front of my eyes.

The question that was at the back of my head in my utmost pain and sadness was: “Why should I continue living? Is this just a nightmare? What is going to happen?”

Hopelessness, loneliness and depression struck me. I floated aimlessly.

At this juncture of my life, I held on to grit to start working my way to defy medical odds, every perception and belief. The best explanation of grit is given by Angela Lee Duckworth in *The Key to Success*:

*“Grit is passion and perseverance for very long-term goals. Grit is having stamina. Grit is sticking with your future, day in, day out, not just for the week, not just for the month, but for years, and working really hard to make that future a reality. Grit is living life like it’s a marathon, not a sprint.”*

I knew that in order to walk again, I had to work hard every day to recollect and rebuild myself, for years. *Years and years and years . . .*

I cultivated myself in optimism and self-confidence. My faith in these words forced me to believe in myself no matter the odds, difficulties and adversities.

There is no magic in attaining these skills—it’s purely repetition. I knew in order to walk again, I had to repeat my physical training and activities day in and day out, and be willing to push myself in a situation where there is so much pressure. After all, pressure builds diamonds.

I forced myself into situations where I would say:

*“I have done this 1,000 times, yet I have not seen the results! It doesn’t matter, I am going to try it another time, and I am going to keep trying until I attain it.”*

I never settled for the options “no” and “cannot.”

As I pressed on with persistence and perseverance, different levels of achievements kicked in over several milestones with consistent effort despite the mental, emotional and physical challenges over the years.

I rose from being bedridden to wheelchair-bound, from wheelchair-bound to standing with the support of parallel bars, from standing to walking with the parallel bars, and progressively to walking independently using walking aids.

This surprised the medical practitioners, and I am still pushing myself hard to be able to walk without any aids over time.

Despite these challenges and being forced to defer my higher education for a year and half, I resumed my studies and completed my Bachelor in Chemical Engineering and Environmental Engineering. I later managed to pull myself through postgraduate studies and obtain a Master of Science in Chemical Engineering.

I remember my professor telling me these words after my graduation: *“I was very doubtful if you would be able to complete your studies in the midst of all the challenges you are facing, but you have totally shifted my mindset, and I am proud of you.”*

Then, I joined an amazing social enterprise (under the talent and management division). I have been with Leaderonomics for a year now, and I carry the qualities that have been embedded in me into my professional life.

I held the position of a development specialist for six months before I was transitioned as a talent partner in the organisational diagnostics and growth unit. Again, I pushed myself out of the comfort zone and three months later, I was given the ownership and accountability to

lead a team within business development, besides making a mark of undertaking several important executions across the organisation.

My boss, whom I report to currently (I would prefer calling him a leader), mentioned to me: *“This was not given, you earned it.”*

Simple words, earning the trust—it required hard work and dedication, didn't it?

This same hard work and dedication paid off, didn't it?

People do ask, how do you juggle between these challenges and sustain yourself through them? My frequent answer will be:

*“Hard work never fails. It may take a little longer, it may require a lot persistence through pain, but be sure enough to not give up.”*

I remember the frequent words from our CEO:

*“Change is painful and if we push through the pain, we would develop ourselves and as we persist till we attain the result, it brings us closer to the goals we strive to achieve.”*

This again reflects that there is no shortcut to success. Sacrifice will appear to be one of the most common needs as we step into this phase. One thing we should constantly remind ourselves of is that amidst pain, there is also joy as things improve. Yet, we should always be prepared to be slapped hard, experience more pain, and be pushed down unexpectedly.

Recently, I had to undergo another spine surgery. It was a difficult decision to make. The surgery that I went through was something uncommon and rarely recommended by most surgeons, but I was assured if successful, it would allow me to have better space for recovery. After the surgery, I felt great amount of physical pain and instantly I

asked, “*Did I make the wrong decision to undergo this surgery? Why am I feeling this intense pain again?*” After a couple of days, as the pain subsided, I came to the conclusion that in order to take two leaps forward, there is sometimes no harm in taking a step back.

After all, the pain is only showing me that I am further developing myself. That pain simply is to remind us, no time to rest until we achieve what we have set our minds to.

Surrounding myself with the right people is definitely one of the most important aspects of my recovery, as I always say that a journey can never be completed alone. In my case, it has always been my parents and siblings, a small number of relatives and friends, as well as the colleagues I work with.

Though my journey is not yet complete, be it either in my recovery or my career—I truly believe the continuous hard work that I have been consistently exerting, the grit, persistence and optimism will lead me to attaining those “crazy” goals, and even allow me to do things I never thought I could.

There’s this line I always stress to people:

*“Words may not explain enough the challenges and battles I go through to keep myself going. Hence if I could rise up to these challenges, all of you out there can do the same too, be it personal, health, work-related, and many more.”*

Good luck in your daily work and in your beautiful life!

*Dinesh has proven, been proving and been wanting to prove himself more in various aspects that includes his recovery, studies, career and life in general. He hopes that he will be able to influence people around the world to continue chasing their dreams despite all adversity that they may face.*

## Roshan Says:

“ One of the columnists at [www.leaderonomics.com](http://www.leaderonomics.com), John Maxwell once said ‘Leadership is influence. Nothing else.’ Influencing people is a key leadership skill. Traditionally, having a title guaranteed some form of influence over others with lesser titles. But those days seem long past. Today, not only do we need to work hard and make great decisions, we also need to learn to influence without a title behind us. Jesse Lyn Stoner’s article sheds some light on how to get this done and still be smiling after. ”

**Leadership  
is influence**

## Chapter 21

# How to Influence Without Authority

*By JESSE LYN STONER*

BACK in the good old days, if you were in a position of authority, you could just announce what needed to be done and assume it would be carried out. But times have changed.

As companies expand and become more complex, no matter what organisational structure is in place, people must work with each other across reporting lines. It doesn't work to say: "Do it because I told you so."

But were the good old days really so good? Hierarchical systems replicate parent-child relationships and create dependency. Worse yet, authority-based systems are a breeding ground for abuse of power and are prone to creating oppressive work environments.

Leading without relying on authority is a higher evolutionary skill. It supports developing adult relationships based on mutual objectives and creates work environments grounded in respect for human dignity.

### **The 8 portals of influence—Ways to influence without authority**

#### **1. Character**

Your own character is your greatest source of influence. Do you lead by example and follow through on your commitments? Are you respectful, authentic and trustworthy?

People will believe you are motivated by the common good and not personal gain.

## **2. Expertise**

Do you have content knowledge and experience? Are you a thought leader? Do you understand the process needed to accomplish the objective?

You can influence by providing a clear logic, an explanation of the benefit, and reassurance that it is the right course of action.

## **3. Information**

Do you have access to valuable information? You can influence by providing data and proof.

## **4. Connectedness**

Do you form close relationships with people? Do they enjoy working with you? Do you engender loyalty? You can influence by appealing to shared values and your emotional connection.

## **5. Social intelligence**

Do you offer insight into interpersonal issues that interfere with work and help facilitate resolution of issues? People trust that you'll be able to help them work together effectively.

## **6. Network**

Do you put the right people in touch with each other? Can you garner the endorsements of credible people? People will trust that you will get the support needed.

## **7. Collaboration**

Do you seek win-win solutions, unify coalitions and build communities? People will trust that you can help them become a high-performing team that accomplishes its objectives.

## **8. Funding**

Do you have access to financial support? If financial resources are required, it's easier to influence when you can ensure adequate funding is available.

### **Build your muscles before you need them**

Too often we rely on one source of influence, and when it doesn't work, there is no fallback. If you always influence through the logic of expertise, you will have little impact on those who are more open to an appeal from someone they have a personal connection with.

When you develop more of these portals, you have more options; and you have the opportunity to step back and consider which the best portal for a particular situation is.

## **3 guidelines to influence without authority**

### **1. Put it out there**

Communicate clearly what you want. First be clear with yourself because if you're not, it will be difficult to be clear with others. Then make sure you've been understood correctly.

### **2. Be transparent**

No hidden agendas. Don't withhold information. Or, if you do need to withhold information, provide an explanation of why. People respect a sincere attempt at influence and resent being manipulated.

### **3. Do your best and be willing to let go**

If an appeal to logic doesn't work, try a different source of influence such as an appeal to values, building a credible network of support, or obtaining financial resources.

However, there's a difference between influencing and driving an agenda. If you are too attached, you are less likely to be heard.

At some point, if you have done your best and have not been successful, you need to let it go.

**There are no guarantees**

When we move away from a control-based approach to leadership, not all efforts to influence will be successful. Failing to influence does not mean you made a mistake. It might have been a good idea but the wrong time. Or, it might have been the wrong idea—maybe you had a blind spot or didn't see a bigger picture.

When we shift from authority-based to influence-based leadership, we have to accept that we are not always in control. However, the reality is that we actually never were.

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*Jesse Lyn Stoner is a business consultant, former business executive, and co-author with Ken Blanchard of the international bestseller *Full Steam Ahead: Unleash the Power of Vision*, which has been translated into 22 languages. She is founder of Seapoint Center for Collaborative Leadership, which hosts her award winning leadership blog.*





## Roshan Says:

“ Tiger Mums and Dads are cropping up all over. From Tiger Wood’s dad to Nicol David’s dedicated parents, most of the star athletes today owe a huge debt of gratitude to their parents. But some call these parents crazy or ‘kiasu.’ Nina Ti, herself a Tiger Mum with her children, explores these ‘crazy’ parents and presents you with insights on how you could possibly help your children too. ”

## Chapter 22

# Go Crazy for Gold

*By NINA TI*

AS we celebrate the arrival of Asia's rising sports superstars to the opening of 28th SEA Games (in 2015), let's not forget to save some applause for the tough band of supporters or "crazy" parents and coaches who perform the real show behind this marvellous parade.

It usually takes a team of dedicated supporters to produce a dedicated athlete. Each of these amazing sportsmen and sportswomen whom you see in the march-past most likely grew up with a family member who wanted to win as much as they did. Hunger, the kind that can numb pain and dry tears, is inherited.

A young person who can get up at 5am to train has the support and devotion of someone at home who is willing to get up at 4am to cook, drive or pack.

"Crazy" parents are no longer the secret ingredient behind every sporting giant's success. As a parent of a national-ranked junior tennis player myself, I like to use the term "dedicated and disciplined" parent. If you are a person who believes in becoming the best that you can be, remember, the apple doesn't fall far from the tree.

### **Comeback**

High-level athletes start really young. For example, elite players in tennis, squash and badminton are introduced to their racquets at five

to eight years old, which is really the age when they can count beyond their toes and keep score during super tiebreaks, the first milestone for children in competition.

Later on, coaches and other professionals such as nutritionists and physiotherapists take over the role of the relentless parent, but by then the ground rules for discipline and excellence have been set.

By the time you hear or read of a sporting prodigy, champion or “phenom” breaking into the scene for the first time, well, the seeds of greatness have already been planted years and years ago. It is only now that the fruit becomes obvious.

To get a good idea of the groundwork that goes into producing extraordinary talents, we should start by looking at early role models, and what kind of ancillary family support these successful athletes receive during their childhood years.

When interviewed, famous sports celebrities like Cristiano Ronaldo and Manny Pacquiao credit family (mothers and siblings) for their steep rise to fame, instead of just making clear how many hours of practice were involved (which is actually true) and how many paid professionals make up a village.

Over time, the love and support an athlete receives will determine the span of his or her career. Our very own squash queen, Nicol David, attributes her success and her down-to-earth nature to the love, support and appreciation showered by her family, friends and teachers, who provided her the right environment towards her pursuit of her passion<sup>11</sup>.

### **Tough love**

For the parent behind the scenes, a lot of pain and perspective are needed to get a promising junior from point A to a very distant point B.

While it is sometimes a case of “mother knows best,” often it is simply the fact that “mother knows **me** best.” In other words, the athletes who go the distance are surrounded by people who care for who they are, not what they do. The grown-ups on board have a greater understanding of the development process and are intimately familiar with the long timeline involved<sup>12</sup>.

Therefore, constant encouragement and age-appropriate training regimens are put in place, while not neglecting important areas of opportunity such as rest and recovery for the growing child.

In my experience travelling from one junior tournament to the next, I often see parents showing an additional kind of care—one that I would describe as *tough love*.

What does tough love mean in sports, especially in families that appear unconventionally sports-crazed? According to Todd Widom, a former ATP (Association of Tennis Professionals) pro, tough love “does **not** mean that you beat down the child mentally, but you explain and expect that certain things need to be done properly, and if they are not, what are the consequences.”

The natural consequence, of course, is bad play. But never cold rejection. Kids who do extremely well in sports are those who enjoy the structure of organised play, love the challenge of competition and have parents who are willing to *enter* into their interests.

Kids who don't do well are those who are coerced or threatened, and drop out of sports before you have had a chance to cheer them on from the grandstand of centre court.

### **Discipline**

For every young, up-and-coming athlete, there is a parent or a coach who is leading by example through patterns of willpower and discipline.

Tiger Woods, one of the highest-paid athlete of all time, showed promise from a very early age. Tiger started golf at three when his father Earl sawed off the handle of an old putter and put the shortened stick in the boy's hands<sup>13</sup>.

In his book *Training the Tiger: A Father's Guide to Raising a Winner and in Both Golf and Life*, Earl describes how to stay involved with a child, and in a heartbeat, how to lead by example.

Aside from chapters on the beauty of a perfect swing, what's readily apparent from the book is how much of an influence the father has been to the son.

In Earl's own words, there are other subtler points for parents to consider: when and how to introduce golf (or any sport) to their child; how to lay the groundwork for open communication; and how to cultivate the right attitude to competition.

It's all very serious, and while Tiger is taught to love the sport, he quickly adapts to the discipline of playing it almost every day.

Like father, like son.

For those who wail in horror and ask: *What about letting kids have fun time?* I can only point to the examples that grown-ups use at work. Fun time is something you do, **when the results don't matter**. (That is not to say that Tiger did not have fun time!)

Success follows discipline, and if you pay your dues and put in your hours and your 100% focus into your job, there is a very high chance that you will win at this too.

Discipline is not punishment. Discipline is doing what needs to be done, at the right time, to the best of your ability.

### **Letting go**

Every individual who trains to win has different expectations of what that win will mean to them. Seasoned athletes may equate winning the gold with a whole gamut of things; national honour, financial promise, elevated status, recognition or deliverance from critics.

And what of a loss? The way people deal with losing a match, a fight or a race is very much an indication of how developed their mental skill sets are.

Sport psychologists have noted that sports really do bring out the best and worst in both player and parents alike. Looking in the mirror helps to re-balance everyone, as well as to re-examine motives every now and then.

According to Matt Russ, an elite US-based coach with extensive experience coaching juniors: “The decisions you make as a parent will have a tremendous effect not only on your child’s athletic development, but their health, well-being and ethics. Choose wisely.”

### **Parting thoughts**

For many Southeast Asian athletes, the journey has not been a short one. The dream of winning gold is certainly a collective hope; and that which can be gathered from small *kampungs* to big cities; across paddy fields and hand-drawn courts; through youth academies and government grants; from parents to officials.

Most importantly, the SEA Games is an opportunity for our home-grown athletes to come together and compete on a level playing field.

Young men and women proudly representing their countries at the SEA Games are likely to have been made from the same mould. Sure, they have physical prowess and mental strength, but beyond a doubt, they have also been gifted with the right people in their lives.

They did not arrive in Singapore by themselves.

*Nina is a dedicated mother of two who loves tennis. She is the backbone behind her daughter who plays tennis competitively at the national level.*



## Roshan Says:

“ One of the toughest leadership challenges we can ever undergo is to lead our children and family. Every parent is a leader to their children. Yet, we spend a lot more time trying to ‘improve’ our leadership at work rather than ensuring we are great leaders at home. Many of us, including me, struggle in being great leaders to our family and children. Yet, this is an area of key importance for each of us. Our family’s success is pivotal. Joseph Tan, who joined the Leaderonomics team last year, has significant experience in helping parents grow into great leaders. He shares his insights on why it is critical for each of us to be great leaders to our children. ”



## Chapter 23

# Working Parents: Getting the Balance Right

**It's time to look after the relationships that matter most to us**

*By JOSEPH TAN*

IN this day and age, we are struck with the desire to do it all, to have it all and to enjoy it all. We work hard, work smart and work tough so that at the end of the day, hopefully it will all work out.

The image we have is that of a juggler attempting to balance as many balls as possible—keeping them all up in the air and making sure that nothing falls. The hustle and bustle of life feels like one continuous cycle.

We want to be an excellent employee, an excellent parent, an excellent spouse, an excellent community leader, an excellent golfer . . . and the list goes on.

Life was much simpler when I was a free-spirited student, but it got more demanding when:

- I got a job.
- Then, I have a job, and I got a wife.
- Then, with the job and the wife, we had a child.
- Then, with the job, the wife, the child, we had another child.

- Then, with the job, the wife, the child, and another child, I had a new business.
- Now, with the job, the wife, the child, another child, a new business, I am getting . . .

Life has become more complicated and the challenge then is to make it all work, but is this a plausible proposition?

Let's take a deeper look specifically at the proposition of being a successful professional and also a successful parent. Is it possible to have equal success at work and at home?

### **The fundamental priority**

The test of leadership is not in whether you can have it all, but whether you can arrange your resources so that important needs are met. Think about it—why would you need a leader when you can have it all? There would be no need for leadership if everybody could have everything without any consideration for budget and resources.

As a parent, your leadership at home also requires you to choose. If there is no need to make wise choices, then there is no need for the application of leadership. What makes choices for parents even more difficult is this—the time when your career is flying is also the time when your child needs you the most. To most of us, this phase hits us when we are in our 30s.

The boss may be impressed by you, and yet your three-year-old at home wants to impress you as well. Bringing everything together is no mean feat, because it requires a partnership approach.

Here is the key: the strength of your marriage is the foundation by which all other priorities are set. Yes, here is the hard truth—your relationship with your spouse is more important than your relationship with your boss.

If you don't believe me, compare your wedding vows with your job description—I have no doubt that your commitment to your spouse is on a higher level. Yet, do we live accordingly? The sad observation is that there are couples today who live as if the only document guiding their lives is the one related to their competencies and not about their commitment to each other.

From a point of leadership unity within your marriage, you will both have to consider the following:

**1. What is your plan for building the character of your child?**

There is no quality time without quantity. Leaving the child with a third party may not necessarily shape their character and values to your standards.

Academic tutoring can be outsourced, but character building and discipline requires direct involvement from the ones who love the child the most—you and your spouse.

**2. What is your plan for defining your career growth?**

Contrary to popular thinking, your career growth does not depend only on your conversation with the boss. From my observation, any significant career growth must involve a joint understanding between the husband and the wife.

The one commodity which you ought to treasure is not how much salary both of you can earn together, rather it is about how to best invest this non-refundable resource called time.

The fact of the matter is this: we spend time on what we value.

**The foundational principle**

The pragmatic mindset (let's do what works) is one of the major factors causing stress to couples nowadays.

While it is important to make practical choices with regard to the daily routine of parenting, there are certain family decisions that can only be made if a foundation of decided principles is in place.

The subtle danger of modernity is this: There are so many activities that can occupy our family lives that we as parents do not commit to the hard work of deciding on what our core values are in the first place.

We become so busy that we are no longer purposeful.

Here are three practical steps to get back to the basics:

- Spend a weekly dating time with your spouse (and do not talk just about work!).
- Establish a mentoring relationship with an older couple and learn from their ups and downs.
- Since the company you work for has a vision/mission statement, why not create one for your family?

Principles are set not during the hustle and bustle of our professional and parenting lives, they must be created beforehand. Before the stress comes, you owe it to your family to get your house in order—in fact, leadership is about getting one's own house in order first.

Whether it is the living room or the boardroom, it really doesn't matter. What is important is that the priorities are first set, then the rest will fall into place much easier.

### **Conclusion—It is not about parenting**

Parenting is not an end in itself, rather it is the outcome of a life of leadership. If you and your spouse do not regularly practise the art of united leadership, then your followers (i.e. your children) will not be motivated to follow you in obedience and respect.

The expectations imposed upon working parents today is not diminishing—at home or at work.

Yet, we must be careful not to be so balanced that we neglect the priorities of what is really important in life (not just work).

Our relationship with our bosses lasts for a season, but the relationships at home last a lifetime.

Keep this perspective in mind and parenting will no longer be a balancing act, it will be a joyful adventure.

*Joseph Tan is CEO of Leaderonomics Good Monday. His 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. Together with his wife, he has a passion for working with parents to exercise the art of leadership at home.*

## Roshan Says:

“ I have known Sanjeev for many years and each time I meet up with him for lunch, he consistently reminds me of the importance of the ‘little things’—the things we take for granted. Many senior leaders (and leaders at all levels) forget that these little things like time management, effective communications and basic execution are usually the reasons why leaders fail. This article by Sanjeev helps highlights some of these issues and more importantly enables us to find ways to focus on improving these small leadership areas in our lives.



## Chapter 24

# How to Keep Your Leadership Development on Track and Why Most Programmes Fail

*By SANJEEV NANAVATI*

ARE you an effective leader? Context matters. Just consider the departure of Antony Jenkins as chief executive of Barclays in July 2015. A different set of priorities apparently required a different sort of leader. Equally an effective leader in one company may not be able to work the same magic elsewhere because the circumstances are different. And one must never ignore the inconvenient truth that luck casts a long shadow over performance.

Leadership development is big business but are companies getting good value?

Despite lots of time and money being spent on churning out leaders, it is not clear that the results justify the means. Outcomes are hard to measure. Cause and effect is difficult to establish. Yet spending often justified as an investment continues unabated.

The solution lies not in more spending but in questioning **where** and **how** the money is spent. Is there something that all senior leaders must excel in regardless of context? The answer unsurprisingly is yes.

However, little time and attention is devoted to five everyday skills.

### **1. Time management**

The scarcest and arguably the most valuable resource a leader has is time. Leaders today are like jugglers keeping an increasing number of balls in the air while walking the tightrope of time. Most leaders struggle with this balancing act.

Working longer hours is not a sustainable solution. Neither is multitasking. While no one solution works for everyone, leaders need guidance on how to manage time effectively.

Unfortunately, few—if any initiatives aimed at senior leaders—focus on this very important dimension. Leaders are left to their own devices and most struggle to overcome this challenge. A little improvement can have an asymmetric impact.

### **2. Efficient meetings**

Meetings take up an extraordinary amount of time. Is this time well spent?

Board meetings with investors and customers are important and unavoidable. Internal meetings take up an inordinate amount of time and there is often much room for improvement. There is a lot of advice available on how to run effective meetings but why little of it finds its way into leadership development programmes is not clear.

To be effective, leaders need to run effective meetings. Pretty mundane, but very important.

### **3. Effective communication**

All leaders need to communicate effectively. As someone once said: “The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”

Presentation courses are typically offered to those at the lower organisational hierarchy when it is most needed at the higher level. Presentations are a small subset of communication.

It’s not just formal client presentations that matter. One-to-one communication, internal town halls and written messages are all equally important.

How leaders connect and how they craft their message determine if they have impact. Leaders need to effectively distil and headline messages, to create a picture, establish an emotional hook and deliver it effectively.

Even the best communicators can do better. Yet scant attention is paid to improving this important skill at senior levels.

### **4. Superior teamwork**

Another essential attribute of leadership is getting things done through others. There are lots of workshops on delegation and empowerment. But first things first, you need the right people to empower and delegate to.

Placing people in the right roles and knowing when to take risks is one of the most important drivers of leadership success. Improving interviewing skills and helping leaders understand their own biases can be developed but they get little airtime.

Related to right fit is the issue of creating and sustaining teamwork. Teamwork is more than just showing up wearing the same T-shirt or going rock-climbing together.

It's a skill that needs to be carefully nurtured and does not come easily to all. You can acquire good players but getting them to play together consistently well is the hard part.

## **5. Decision-making and execution**

Every leader has to make decisions and to execute. The more senior the leader, the greater the stakes. In some situations, only the leader needs to make the call. In others, you need to facilitate the process of arriving at a decision. The crucial difference is knowing what to do and when.

In addition, behavioural science and systems thinking provide very effective tools for making decisions and executing under uncertainty.

For example, understanding the pitfalls of rushing to cause and effect judgments, confusing causality for correlation, guarding against cognitive biases, recognising the power of diversity, appreciating the importance of trial and error in innovation and taking a systems view of problems and opportunities can make a huge difference in the quality of decision-making and execution.

Yet very little of this finds its way into leadership development programmes.

### **Provoking thoughts**

The battle to develop leaders rages on with greater intensity with aerial bombardment by executive development programmes, internal training courses and executive coaches.

Generals know that air power alone cannot win a war. Developing skills in strategy, vision, and mission are like air strikes which are necessary but rarely decisive.

Winning the ground war of time management, efficient meetings, effective communication, superior teamwork, decision-making and execution are crucial for successfully developing leaders.

Faulty focus is often compounded by another flaw leading to unsatisfactory results. Companies fail to ask basic questions such as “Have you done this yourself?” or “Have you been in this position before?” before signing up to expensive programmes or coaching from people who have never led, run a business or managed complex operations.

Armchair generals are rarely effective and can be downright dangerous in a real war. Management and developing leaders is an apprenticeship business.

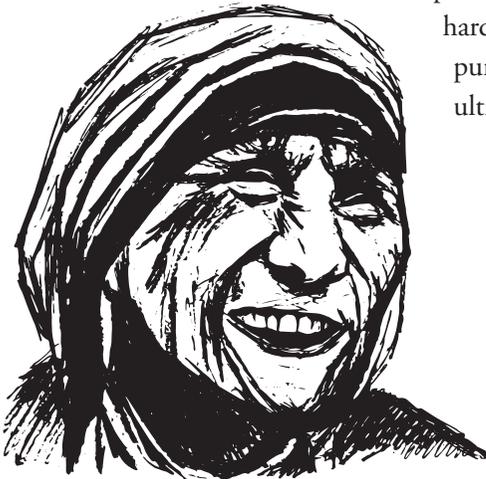
Engaging non-practitioners to develop practitioners is hard to justify but is widely practised. Chief executive officers and board members can get better results if they begin to ask the right questions and focus on skills that can make an immediate difference.

*Sanjeev Nanavati is a senior faculty of Leaderonomics. He is also a senior advisor to a global management consulting firm, a big four accounting firm and the chairman of a public-listed company. He also coaches C-suite executives to improve their performance. Until recently, he was the longest-serving CEO of Citibank Malaysia. To leverage the author for your training needs, send an email to [training@leaderonomics.com](mailto:training@leaderonomics.com)*

## Roshan Says:

“ In the last several years, I have been approached by numerous senior leaders from across the world who have been very successful in what they do, but yet feel an emptiness within. They come with more questions than answers. Each of them worked really hard to get success, yet what they crave even more than success is significance. I wrote this article to share the importance of moving from success to significance. As the last article in the book, I believe it leaves us a timely reminder of the

importance of working equally hard in our lives to obtain purpose and meaning and ultimately significance. ”



## Chapter 25

# Leaving a Leadership Legacy

**Legacies begin by moving from success to significance**

*By ROSHAN THIRAN*

A few years ago, I shared the stage with Patch Adams at the *Gathering of the Great Minds*. While there are many great leaders in the world spreading messages of hope and reconciliation, no one comes close to Adams in leaving a legacy of greatness. His message was simple: Love conquers all!

Adams was a renegade medical student who vowed to begin his own hospital where no one would ever have to pay for care. Upon becoming a physician, he immediately invited patients into his home. For 12 years, he lived with his wife, two children, four other physicians and as many as 50 homeless patients.

He neither turned anyone away nor charged a penny for care during these years. He treated tens of thousands of patients out of love, asking nothing in return. Years later, Adams set up the Gesundheit Institute which offers free and holistic medical care to everyone.

Adams learnt love from his mother, a school teacher. His father was killed in the military when he was only six and since then, he has championed “love” in everything, including in business. He even urges medical students to develop compassionate connections with their patients.

Adams, now 70 years old (and famous from the movie about him), uses love and humour to heal, creating a great legacy that will outlive him. Today may be a good time to consider the legacy we leave behind. An ancient proverb says, “If you lead a meaningful life, you never really die. Instead, you break into 1,000 pieces, each of which stay alive within the people whose lives you've touched along the way.”

### **The Nikola and Dranafilé saga**

I recently read the story about Nikola Bojaxhiu and his wife, Dranafilé. Nikola was a great businessman who earned enough to make most of their dreams come true. Their children were set to follow Nikola and Dranafilé's route to achieving similar success. But the parents decided that they did not want the same success for their kids. Instead, they wanted to raise them to achieve significance.

They realised that they needed to change their own lives from a successful one to an enduring one, which shaped a legacy. They opened their home to strangers, started serving instead of receiving, volunteered and helped countless people.

Their youngest daughter, Agnes, decided that she would devote her life to being significant. She was smart, pretty and industrious and knew these were keys to being successful, but she learnt from her parents that to be significant, her heart, character and love were more critical.

In 1997, while I was working in New York, Agnes passed away and I was asked to help on a TV obituary special on Agnes. The world knew Agnes as Mother Teresa. Her parent's decision to forego “success” in lieu of “significance” not only enabled Nikola and Dranafilé to leave their legacy but ensured that their legacy lived on in their daughter. Her legacy lives on today in millions of lives affected by her grace and mercy. Great leaders leave a legacy that transcends them and cements their contribution to the growth and transformation of their organisation.

Leadership guru Ken Blanchard adds, “Many people measure their success by wealth, recognition, power, and status. There’s nothing wrong with those, but if that’s all you’re focused on, you’re missing the boat. If you focus on significance—using your time and talent to serve others—that’s when truly meaningful success can come your way.”

### **A tainted legacy**

In July 2006, Kenneth Lay died. He was founder of Enron, the fastest growing organisation in the world in the 1990s. However, the legacy he left behind was a tainted one.

Jeffrey Skilling, Bernie Ebbers (Worldcom), John Rigas (Adelphia), Dennis Kozlowski (Tyco) and others are CEOs (chief executive officers) who now face jail time and have left shameful legacies. Many of them worked just as hard as others but their focus on short-term success destroyed their legacies.

Lee Iacocca and Jack Welch, painstakingly built their legacies on solid foundations, thus achieving leadership legacies which are admired all over the world.

Have you given thought to what legacy will you be leaving behind? This question is especially important for leaders because you have the privilege of influencing a lot of people. Will your legacy be like Jack Welch, Nelson Mandela, Patch Adams, Steve Jobs and Nikola and Dranfile, who raised their daughter Agnes to greatness? Or will your legacy be tarnished by deception, misdeeds, shame, regret, hypocrisy, or a failure to reach your potential?

Some will argue that legacy is only for leaders. I believe that within everyone is a leader. Parents are leaders. You are leaders in your family. If you lead one person, you are a leader and have a responsibility to leave a positive legacy.

Legacy is a powerful word closely associated with leadership. Wikipedia describes legacy as “something handed down from an ancestor, predecessor or from the past; or something acquired without compensation.”

Legacy is synonymous with birthright, inheritance, heritage and tradition. Leaders have the ability to create and pass down legacies. The Wright brothers, handed down the legacy of space travel by flying a small plane off the coast of North Carolina.

As leaders, we have the ability to create legacies that not only change our world, but inspire others beyond our dreams and ambitions. So, how does one start their journey of building a lasting legacy, one that you can be proud of?

The answer begins by taking an inventory of yourself. You need to find out what makes you tick—what your true passion is.

### **Legacies are built on passion**

A recent survey indicated that 75% of the world’s population do not know what their true passion is. Three out of four people are not doing what they were meant to do. Legacies begin by doing what makes us tick inside. Perhaps this is why there is so much unhappiness going on in our society.

Finding your true passion isn’t as simple as it may seem. Asking yourself some pertinent questions like “what puts a smile on your face,” “what do you find easy to do” or “what sparks your creativity” may help you in your journey of discovering your passion.

Finding our true passion usually involves a good amount of time and a lot of honest soul searching. Doing what you have a passion for brings out your best and this leads to greatness. Greatness breezes success and more importantly, significance.

### **From success to significance**

Peter Drucker once said, *“People now have two lives—life one and life two . . . They are over-prepared for life one and under prepared for life two. There is no university for the second half of life.”*

According to Lloyd Reed, author of *Half-Time*, what Drucker meant was that we all live our lives in two halves—one in pursuit of “success” and the other half in pursuit of “significance.” He adds, “I came to the realisation that each of the buildings I had built would one day be torn down and be forgotten.” So, he pursued significance to ensure a legacy. The “half-time” concept was popularised by Reed, who reached midlife and discovered that the pursuit of success was not enough. He wanted the second half of life to really count for something meaningful and significant.

Bill Craig, LifeWay’s director of leadership said, “There is widespread desire to transition from success to significance among people reaching the second half of their lives.”

So how do you find your significance? Here are a few questions that may help you:

1. Who am I?
2. Why am I here?
3. Where am I going?
4. How will I get there?
5. When I get there, what will I have?
6. What’s stopping me from moving forward with exploring my passion?

If you feel successful but not too significant, spend some time thinking about these tough questions. When we can answer all six questions honestly and promptly, we can move on to the next step to ensure our legacy.

Many of us have achieved a measure of success in the first half of life, and it has been a thrill. But deep down inside, we want to count for something far more. Something bigger than ourselves. Significance. You want to discover where your deepest passions intersect with your greatest abilities and harness them to leave a legacy.

How do you write your own recipe for significance? Once you have answered the questions posed above, you will start to discover what you really believe about yourself and this will be your foundation for the blueprint to your legacy.

Try making a list of the 10 most significant achievements in your life. For each one, make a note of why it was significant. The point of this exercise is to get you thinking about what really matters to you.

Many of us have been operating on a survival or security mode for so long that we have become out of touch with our own values. Another part of writing your recipe for significance is to identify what makes you unique. Everybody has abilities and qualities that make them who they are.

Staying connected is the next ingredient for finding significance. In business, everyone tells us it is who we know that matters. Actually, it is who cares about us that really matters. We need to stay connected to people who care.

The marketplace will continue to promote a “survival of the fittest” mentality, so building authentic relationships with people who believe in you is critical to realising your significance and building your legacy. Leaders need passionate followers. Followers enable legacies to live on forever.

The final ingredient of finding significance in your work is combating your fear of failure. Many of us are hesitant to make changes for fear

that our plans will not be realised. But the only way to discover what you really want to do is to do something to the best of your ability. By trying your hardest, you will learn the most. Not trying, on the other hand, will tell you nothing. The real question you need to ask yourself is not, “Can I afford to make a change?” but, “Can I afford **not** to?” If you spend your life playing it safe, you will never realise your fullest potential.

Finding significance in your work is not a matter of choosing the right career or working for the right company. Whether you work at home, in a full-time career outside the home, or both, maintaining balance in today’s world comes from understanding that careers will never offer the security that personal significance does.

### **Success to significance in organisations**

Two construction workers were asked to describe their same jobs. The first employee said his job is to lay bricks. The second said he is building a cathedral. Which employee would you rather have working for your organisation? The second employee works for significance whilst the first does not.

Organisations that dwell only on its successes and forget to focus on its significance soon lose their way. I spent two years working at Johnson and Johnson (J&J). In 1942, General Robert Wood Johnson wrote a one-page document that came to be known as the J&J Credo.

The document outlines the company’s approach to conducting business. It states that the company’s first responsibility is to the people who use its products and services; the second responsibility is to its employees; the third is to the community and environment; and the final responsibility is to its stockholders. In concluding the Credo, General Johnson emphasised his belief that if the first three responsibilities are met, the shareholders—should be well-served.

General Johnson's legacy focuses on significance (their patients and employees) and relegates success (shareholder value) to the lower realms of their priority, ensuring countless successes. And the best part is, every employee at J&J "lives" by the Credo. They find their personal significance through the Credo.

The company's Credo is the cornerstone of the company's culture, not because it's framed on the wall of every office, but because it remains present in day-to-day discussions and decision-making at every level of the company.

Sceptics may believe that pursuing significance may somehow hinder success. From J&J's experience, however, the opposite is true.

### **Legacies are created daily**

John Maxwell states, "The success of my day is based on the seeds that I sow, not the harvest I reap." Too often, leaders bypass the process of sowing seeds in favour of short-term results. Sadly, the end begins to justify the means, and principles are tossed out in hopes of quick success. This is what led to Lay, Ebbers, Rigas and the host of other leaders who are now reduced to ruined legacies.

Legacies are not created quickly. They are built daily through values, hard work, integrity and character. The choices you make every day with your time and efforts directly impact how you will be remembered. Maxwell outlines a few reasons why sowing well is better than instant results, "The seeds I sow will determine the harvest I reap. There is no reaping unless I have been sowing. Sowers are committed to giving before receiving. Sowers enjoy giving more than receiving. Sowing daily into the lives of others will compound over time."

It's not about **leaving** a legacy, it is about **living** a legacy. Legacies are created daily through your action and service.

“Leaders have been conditioned to think about the future. But in doing so, they have forgotten about the present. And the present is how they create their legacy,” says author Shane A. Yount. He adds that, “In the scheme of managing our time, dwelling on our own legacy is usually tagged as a low priority—an exercise in fantasy or daydreaming since so many other activities urgently demand our attention. But, this type of leadership thinking is flawed. That is because each of us is leaving a leadership legacy today at this very moment.”

Legacies are a result of your actions taken today. The legacy you leave is the life you lead. By living each day as if we matter, we offer up our own unique legacy.

Cable television network C-SPAN commissioned a study to judge the 41 past American presidents on 10 leadership qualities. The top five presidents were: Abraham Lincoln, Franklin Roosevelt, George Washington, Theodore Roosevelt and Harry Truman. The bottom two were Bill Clinton and Richard Nixon.

Interestingly, both Clinton and Nixon would have finished higher if one element of the 10 qualities were eliminated—moral authority. Clinton would have finished at 21st place instead of 41st and Nixon at 25th instead of the 40th place. Our character and actions are key to our legacy. Both Clinton and Nixon were found out for scandals due to their character going astray. Building character is a daily “legacy” battle.

### **Legacies endure through succession**

Finally, legacies must have succession. Drucker once said that, “There is no success without a successor.” Drucker’s memorable quote is a fitting definition of legacy. Obviously, a legacy is something we leave behind. It can be possessions derived through our material success, or people we have influenced through our moral significance.

Many years ago, Lincoln's leadership ended slavery in America. After the war, Lincoln rebuilt the south, ensuring goodwill towards the freed black slaves. However, he was suddenly assassinated and Andrew Johnson took over as President. Johnson reconstructed the south's oppressive system of white domination and destroyed Lincoln's legacy of freedom, stunting the civil rights movement and perpetuating injustice for another century. As Maxwell rightly states, "A leader's lasting value is measured by succession." If Lincoln had a successor who shared his vision, America may have not had to ensure its torrid racial issues that plagued them all the way into the 20th century.

How leaders close out their tenure has a lasting impact. As their term of influence grows shorter, leaders must channel their energy, hopes, and fears toward helping their successor and the team they leave behind.

The best leader is the one who creates leaders among others. Leaders have an incredible platform to develop, train and equip others for leadership success. Skills can be taught and strengthened under the right leadership. A team, organisation or group benefits the most when leaders mentor and encourage them for success in all areas. This type of leadership enhances and builds up the individuals and creates a cycle of ongoing teaching and training.

Over and over again, I have discovered that the businesspeople who are the busiest, the happiest, and the most prosperous are the ones who are the most generous with their knowledge and their expertise. People who love what they are doing, who love to learn new things, to meet new people, and to share what and whom they know with others: these are the people who end up creating the most economic value and, as a result, moving their companies forward and end up creating lasting leadership legacies.

### **Final thoughts**

It is always morbid to think of death, but when we die, you wonder what will be said in our eulogy. We become immortal not through material possessions but through the legacies we leave behind.

People do not remember us for what we do for ourselves but for what we do for them. At the end of the day, no one remembers what numbers you closed for each of the quarters you were in charge. But they remember your leadership, service, character and inspiration.

Adams talks about love as his purpose in life. John Lennon and Paul McCartney, echoed Adams by saying, “In the end, the love you take is equal to the love you give.” Likewise, your legacy is more dependent on what you give today, rather than what you take.



# Endnotes

## Chapter 11: Into the Wild

- <sup>1</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDCYYUGl5eg>
- <sup>2</sup> <http://animalist.com/discoveryworldsafari/iguana/>
- <sup>3</sup> <http://www.anapsid.org/shedding.html#ig>
- <sup>4</sup> <http://leaderonomics.com/leadership/dung-is-good-pain-is-better>
- <sup>5</sup> <http://petiguanacare.org/taming/>
- <sup>6</sup> <http://worldofpet.blogspot.com/2007/12/green-iguana.html>

## Chapter 12: Luck is Not Luck

- <sup>7</sup> <http://www.amazon.com/Luck-No-Accident-Making-Happenstance/dp/188623003X>
- <sup>8</sup> <http://www.women-inventors.com/Bette-Nesmith-Graham.asp>
- <sup>9</sup> [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/30/business/luck-is-just-the-spark-for-business-giants.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=2](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/30/business/luck-is-just-the-spark-for-business-giants.html?pagewanted=all&_r=2)
- <sup>10</sup> <http://quotes.lifehack.org/quote/kyle-chandler/opportunity-does-not-knock-it-presents-itself/>

## Chapter 22: Go Crazy for Gold

- <sup>11</sup> <http://leaderonomics.com/personal/top-of-the-world-a-chat-with-leading-lady-nicol-david>
- <sup>12</sup> <http://sportfactoryproshop.com/blog/how-to-destroy-your-childs-athletic-future-in-3-easy-steps>
- <sup>13</sup> [http://www.jockbio.com/Bios/T\\_Woods/T\\_Woods\\_bio.html](http://www.jockbio.com/Bios/T_Woods/T_Woods_bio.html)



# About Leaderonomics

(the parent company of [Leaderonomics.com](http://Leaderonomics.com))

*“You must be the change you wish to see in the world” —Mahatma Gandhi*

Numerous people all over the world are attracted to the vision and mission of Leaderonomics—which is to “change the world.” Below is a short write-up on Leaderonomics’ purpose and why folks from all around the world are partnering and volunteering for its initiatives.

## **Why We Do What We Do?**

Leaderonomics came into existence a few years ago when Roshan Thiran and Ang Hui Ming began exploring ways to enable underprivileged kids and youths to be given the same access to leadership development and education as the urban kids.

Their experiments began when they organised annual youth camps and other developmental programmes for the less fortunate in the communities. This resulted in numerous youths who may have otherwise never been able to attend universities or secure corporate jobs, become relatively successful. Not only did these individuals thrive in multinational organisations, they also inspired their siblings, relatives and other friends in their “old state” to believe that nothing was impossible—if they learnt leadership and embraced it.

This led to both Roshan and Hui Ming wanting to replicate these yearly experiments more frequently. Hence, the formation of Leaderonomics. Both were previously working with General Electric and they both left to start this dream.

At Leaderonomics, there is a strong belief that everyone needs to be a leader. Leadership is not exclusive to business CEOs or politicians.

Parents are leaders. If you lead a community project, you are a leader. Everyone is, in fact, a leader. But not everyone is given training, development, and access to enable them to become the leader they were meant to be.

Everyone needs support and expertise to build their leadership capabilities and grow into better leaders in all areas of their lives. And so, at Leaderonomics, they have taken up this challenge to provide everyone with access to leadership development, even if they cannot afford it. The dream, beginning with Malaysia and Indonesia and other developing countries, is to provide the world with sustainable leadership development model, accessible for everyone.

### **The Leaderonomics Vision**

“Growing People into Leaders . . . Building Communities of Love . . .  
Transforming the Nation . . .”

At Leaderonomics, we believe that it is crucial to:

- Set new goals to challenge, bond and propel all people to develop into leaders, irrespective of racial, regional or social backgrounds.
- Play an active role in helping the world’s leaders of all ages, classes and ethnicities to adapt and meet dramatic changes in our natural and synthetic environments and to help them grow and develop as leaders.
- Establish leadership in all its forms, transforming the minds and hearts of leaders to create a just, free and caring society.
- Aim for leadership and development across developing nations.

Our vision is to grow people into leaders, build affectionate communities, and transform human societies. This vision is anchored by the Golden Rule that we can only prosper if we protect the prosperity of those around us. As members of one vast community, we want to play our role as agents of civilisation by creating, redeeming and sustaining life

in all spheres of the global society. Our vision is centred on helping everyone build their leadership capabilities and helping them grow into community leaders that make a difference in the world. We strongly believe that leadership will help transform communities and societies into a better, fairer and more caring society.

### **So How Do We Do What We Do?**

With the intention to not only build leaders in the corporate world but amongst the young and the undeserved communities as well, we decided to build a social enterprise—one that funds its community initiatives through revenues generated by providing services to organisations.

Part of the reason for this was that both Hui Ming and Roshan did not want to become a dependant non-governmental organisation (NGO) that had to “borrow” to ensure their vision of changing the world through leadership is realised.

And so, Leaderonomics was set up as a social enterprise, which provides professional services to corporations in managing learning and development, talent management, and operational effectiveness. These same services are provided for the development and growth for youth and other community needs too. These developmental efforts are in fact the key focus—to build leaders of tomorrow, who will transform nations for the betterment of the human race.

For more information on the social business model of Leaderonomics, you can get information from [www.leaderonomics.org](http://www.leaderonomics.org) or email [people@leaderonomics.com](mailto:people@leaderonomics.com) for details.

### **Why You Need to Get Involved in Leaderonomics**

We are acutely aware that such dreams and visions cannot be achieved alone. In reality, we are nothing by ourselves. It is by mutual encouragement and communal execution that we can carry the hope

that one day we will see the fruition of what we envisioned. We believe that with each of your encouragement and support, we will be able to execute our vision of change by:

“Growing People into Leaders . . . Building Communities of Love . . . Transforming the Nation . . .”

This is our vision, and we hope it will be yours too.

We need organisations and companies to partner with us and use our corporate services (including our training and consulting services) so that we can earn a profit which can be used for our youth and community work. We need the help of individuals and organisations to support the enormous work that has to be done for the poor, orphaned and underprivileged communities in developing countries. Numerous individual help is required in teaching these kids, in supporting community work, and in physically being present for this community and work.

As such, we earnestly seek your partnership in this journey, to make this vision a reality. As Roshan points out in this book, “It takes a community to build a leader.” Likewise, we know, it takes leaders to transform our nation. We hope to help you be the best leader you can be, in the hope that you will go out and help us change the world together.

To learn more about partnership opportunities, visit **[www.leaderonomics.org](http://www.leaderonomics.org)** or send an email to **[training@leaderonomics.com](mailto:training@leaderonomics.com)**

All the best in your leadership journey.

Warm regards,  
Your friends from Leaderonomics

# Acknowledgements

This compilation of articles from [www.leaderonomics.com](http://www.leaderonomics.com) contains 25 of our favourite articles. There were more than 2,000 articles published in 2015 and it was very hard to pick 25 as almost all of them merited a spot in this book. However, we had to limit this book to 25 articles, and had to practise the leadership that we write about—making tough choices selecting a top 100 list, learning to let go of great articles we wanted to keep and feature in the book, and ultimately 25 were shortlisted for this book. We have to thank and acknowledge a number of people. We must thank our brilliant team of editors and curators who have worked hard in 2015—Michelle Boon, Lim Lay Hsuan, Prethiba Esvary, Tamara Jayne, Nina Ti, Prema Jayabalan, Sandy Clarke, Sara Yee, Jasmine Chuah, Ian Lee, Darshana Sivanantham, Karen Neoh, and the countless others who supported the content curation team.

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Thank you so much for your partnership as you are truly making a difference in the world. And to all our readers at Leaderonomics.com, thank you for your continued readership and thank you for making us one of the best (if not the best!) leadership development site in the world. And thanks to everyone for enabling us to fulfil our mission of "democratising leadership" so that every person has a chance to change their lives and their world.



**Leaderonomics**

*The Science of Building Leaders*

Leadership in Asia specifically has not been quite explored as it has been in recent years as people start to realise that, “everything rises and falls on leadership” (John Maxwell’s famous leadership philosophy).

Leaderonomics.com aims to become the enabler for everyone from around the world to have access to the various leadership insights, articles, trends, podcasts and videos from an Asian perspective, as well as from a global view, via curated and well-written content locally, regionally and globally.

By reading, watching, learning and being a leader through Leaderonomics.com, we wish to bring out the best version of a leader in all of us through engaging and purposeful content.

As you go through your leadership journey with us, starting with personal mastery before moving on to functional, leadership and business masteries, let Leaderonomics.com be your source of inspiration, reference, guide and motivation to affect transformative change from the inside out.

By putting together this limited edition book for your exclusive collection, we hope to give you a little glimpse of what you can expect to read, watch, listen and learn from Leaderonomics.com, and what is more to come as we enter the era of digitalised content.

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