

LEADERSHIP



What Makes Great Leaders?

By Dr Lynda Wee

The common saying, “same old thinking produces same old results”, does not hold true anymore. Enter Game-changers. They are disruptive innovators who create new rules of the games with their more effective and efficient value proposition. Think Uber. Think Airbnb.

To lead more effectively in this volatile industry, many leaders attended training and underwent coaching. Despite all these efforts, performance gaps still exist. What else can be done to develop great leaders?

1. Sources of inspiration

Where do leaders look to anticipate change and be inspired to act? The answer is in how they choose to spend their time. It is all in their appointment organiser; who are they spending time with, what are they discussing on, what are the tasks that they are doing, what are they reading, etc. Next, they should synthesise these data points to gain deep understanding of possible discontinuities. Then, make the key decisions on how to course correct or design new winning moves.

Great leaders are curious. They look around, look ahead, not just look down on their digital devices and reports. Instead of being passive, they are active. They

gather insights and shape the future. They act, not just react.

2. Diversity of network

What is the diversity extent of a leaders’ network? The “good old boy network” is good up to a point because of high context and comfort of team relationship. On the other hand, it lacks robustness due to the sameness in thinking and may lead to groupthink.

Great leaders know how to build their network with people different from them. These people can be different in terms of age, nationality, occupation and even how they think or feel. Yet, despite these differences, they still trust and want to collaborate to achieve common goals with these retail leaders. Great leaders benefit from leveraging, not ignoring the richness of diversity.

3. Courage to step out of comfort zone

Are leaders bold enough to abandon their past even when they are successful? Do they go along to get along? Do they keep doing what is comfortable? Do they over-stay in their comfort zone? Do they dare to deviate to find different and better ways?

The common saying, “If it ain’t broken, break it”, promotes disruptive innovation by requiring leaders to get out of their comfort zone to seek innovation to update their business and stay relevant.

New moves come with risks and possibly better yield if proven right. Doing the same old things come with risks too – risk of being left behind. It is a shape-up or ship-out world. Doing nothing is risky too!

Great leaders have emotional stamina to withstand the nay-sayers telling them that their ideas are naïve and will not work. They are prepared to be labelled as the crazy ones. They think different and will attract like-minded people to join them, not the faint-hearted. Then, together, they leapfrog!

In today’s rapidly changing environment, great leaders do not settle for comfortable predictability of yesterday. Instead they prepare themselves today for unknown possibilities of tomorrow by being bold, curious, creative, adaptive, action-oriented and network with diverse talents to achieve common goals.

“Education is what people do to you, learning is what you do to yourself.”
Joi Ito