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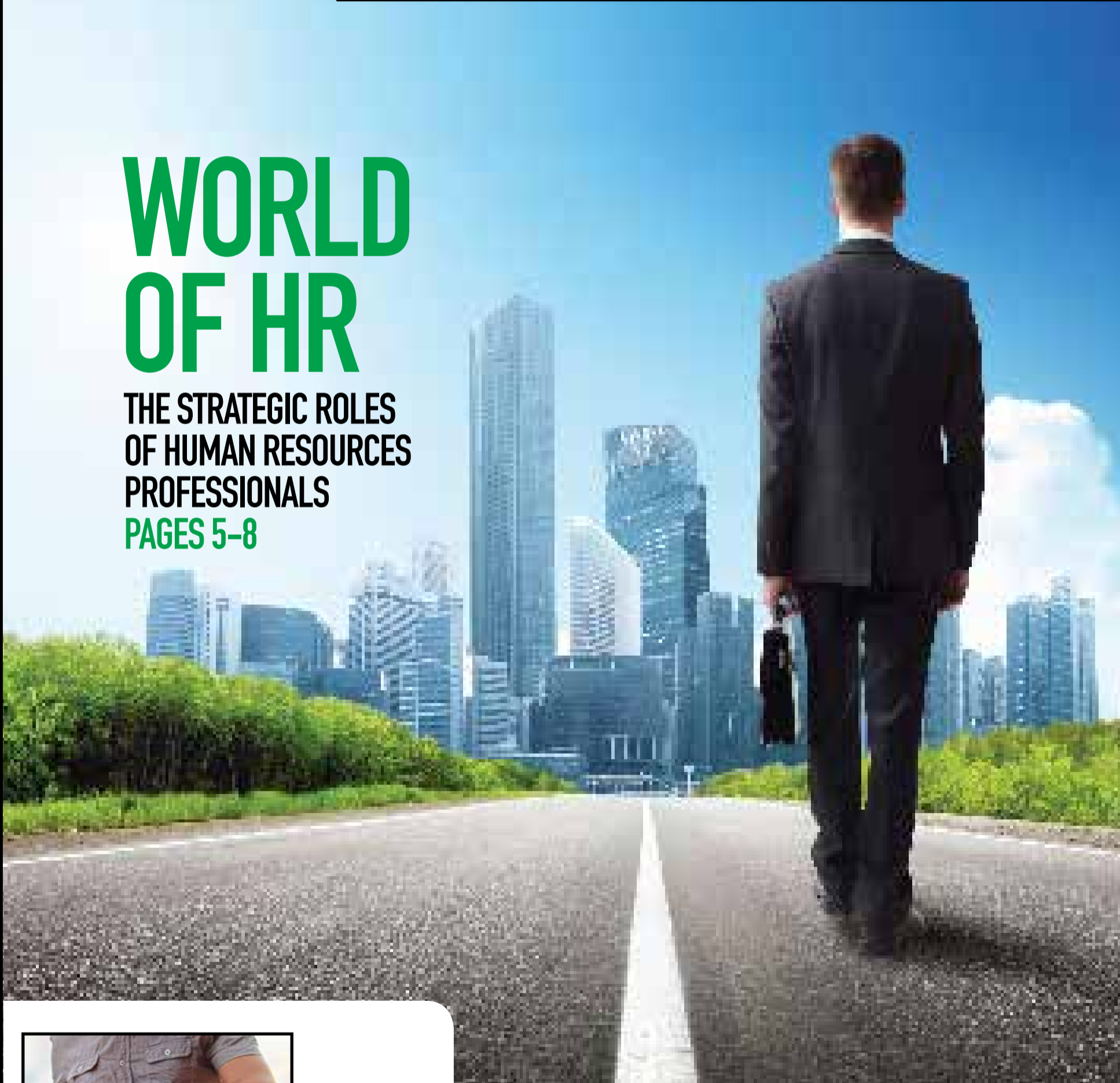


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# WORLD OF HR

THE STRATEGIC ROLES OF HUMAN RESOURCES PROFESSIONALS  
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## Workplace boundaries

Are there dividing lines that need to be respected in the office?

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## WORK & PLAY

Treating your employees like friends can prove to be problematic

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## HEAR YE! HEAR YE!

Active listening is a skill that every parent should master

SANDY SAYS

# MANAGING RELATIONSHIPS

FRIENDSHIPS are bound to happen in the workplace. We spend around 40 hours per week with our colleagues, and so connections are inevitable.

Further, there will be friendships fostered between senior management and employees, particularly within small and medium-sized enterprises and young companies. While these friendships can have their advantages, it is vital for the success of the business – and the morale of fellow colleagues – that measures are put in place to effectively manage close relationships in the workplace.

In this week's issue, business author Brian Fielkow writes about the pitfalls of neglecting to establish boundaries with colleagues to whom we're especially close.

He advises, "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."

Very few of us have no awareness of or have never played a part in office politics, which we all know too well can cultivate a toxic environment in an organisation if left unchecked. While it's easier to let difficult situations fester without effective management to address any issues that might arise, it will undoubtedly be to the peril of the organisation that ignores the dangers that can be brought about by cliques and special relationships.

Indeed, if many such relationships are formed within an organisation, they may well serve to the detriment of the company and its performance. While it's important to establish a personal connection with those with whom we work, it is imperative that we don't overstep the mark.

Some might say that, in order for business to thrive, we must treat our colleagues almost in the same manner as we treat family members. However, in most cases, our families aren't responsible for the bottom line – they provide us with love, care, and companionship: they don't work with us towards business objectives.

In a recent report, Deloitte suggested that human resources and business leaders are faced with significant issues with regard to leadership and workforce capacity. Part of the problem, it suggests, stems from our social networks, cliques, and the special relationships we hold with business clients and other individuals.

Yes, it's important to establish connections in the workplace to aid cohesion and innovation – but are we taking it too far to the point of allowing pleasure to dictate our business?

Till next week,  
**SANDY**  
Editor  
Leaderonomics.com

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## A TRIBUTE TO A GREAT FRIEND

This week, we at Leaderonomics lost a great friend. We are saddened to announce the passing of Hee Kim Fah, founding partner and chairman of EP-Asia Group and its subsidiaries: EP-Tec Solutions, EP-Net Technology, GTI Media Asia, and CareerBuilder Malaysia. He was 54 this year.

Kim Fah was not only a believer in our vision, he also partnered with us on many fronts to help make Malaysia a better place.

All the team at Leaderonomics offer our sincere condolences to his family and friends. May his soul rest in peace.

We are thankful for his generosity and love for our nation, and hope that his life inspires many others to live a life worthy of their calling. Rest in Peace Kim Fah. You will be fondly remembered by all of us.

## OFFICE ROMANCES – YAY OR NAY?

By **SARA YEE**  
editor@leaderonomics.com

LOVE blinds. Love takes a person and makes them the world – the perfect world. Then it all comes crashing down when they find you both inside the janitor's room.

Office romances are perhaps to, put it plainly, romances that happen while you are working, but with the added risk of being caught by your supervisors.

While a lot of people say you cannot stop love, being involved with someone, especially someone who is already in a relationship, can lead to a lot of trouble on both sides of the divide.

### OFFICE ROMANCE

Case in point is Brian Dunn; the ex-chief executive officer of the electronics megalith Best Buy. Three years ago, he was suspected to have been involved with a female employee and whose "extra time" he could not explain.

Romances in the office can be risky business and often, office regulations have clauses that are put in place to prevent it. It still happens, but how do you deal with such things?

What do you do when things heat up? Take to heart the case of Dunn and the lessons it offers you.

### IF POSSIBLE...

Try to avoid office romances as much as possible, as it can put you in a legal position that you do not want to be caught in.

It can be made more complicated if your partner is someone who is involved with other people in the office, or has a significant other who works there.



Politely convey your boundaries so that it does not escalate to the height of Dunn's. Better yet, make sure it is nipped in the bud before any romance has the chance to blossom.

Keep your position clear and simple and, while office gossip is inevitable, avoid playing the role of office gossip, which can lead to stressful consequences for others.

### BUT...

If this is a potential romance that is leading somewhere, take a good hard look at the relationship because, many times, it is not worth it. Unless you want to end up investigated or become hot office gossip, don't do it.

Keep these interactions to a minimal and develop professional relationships with those who can further your career, but without any romantic implications.

Healthy relationships are ones that have open communication, trust, and honesty. If you must become involved in an office romance, think very carefully of the implications before doing so.

### FINALLY...

Grow all relationships. Nurture them. But keep the office romances to a minimal. Your work will flourish in healthy, open relationships, not ones bound by secrecy.

Especially if you are in a high position, these sorts of affairs, much like Dunn's case, can lead to losses for the company and perhaps more alarmingly, it reflects your sense of morality. After you lose touch with your professional standards, it can be hard to bounce back.

The opinions expressed in this career guide are those of the writers or the people they quoted and not necessarily those of Leaderonomics.



## DEEP-ROOTED ALIGNMENT

WHEEL alignment affects fuel efficiency, tire wear, tire performance, vehicle handling and manoeuvrability.

What is alignment? Why does it matter? And how do we achieve it?

We explore the importance of alignment in organisations, and the top down approach that is necessary for it to be successfully achieved.

As it is with many approaches in life, it all starts with self-alignment. How are you aligned with your personal goals and purpose? How does it translate with organisational alignment?

Evelyn Teh of Leaderonomics shares her take on this subject as we also touch on "surface alignment" and "minority effect".

For other great leadership insights, including those by Marshall Goldsmith, visit [www.leaderonomics.com](http://www.leaderonomics.com). If you missed any of our past issues, go to [www.leaderonomics.com/publications](http://www.leaderonomics.com/publications) and **download for FREE!**

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Sit back and enjoy what we have in store for you!

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# SETTING WORK BOUNDARIES



## CAN THERE REALLY BE BOUNDARIES?

By **JOSEPH TAN**  
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*"Don't ever take a fence down until you know the reason why it was put up."* – G.K. Chesterton

In today's connected world, it is getting harder to compartmentalise communications – everywhere we go, there is probably a data connection facility available for us to stay in touch (case in point – I am now typing this article while waiting to board my flight).

For anyone seeking to have a balance between work and life, it is becoming increasingly elusive because the boundaries between work and life are blurring – could we be reaching a societal situation where we work to live and live also to work?

Coupled with the expectations of high performance and a challenging economic environment, employees are constantly having to multi-task, multi-think and multi-train.

In fact, it is a common sight today that, everywhere you go, you see people switching screens and applications on their devices while eating, conversing and even while walking!

It is no longer the case where we bring work home; we now have the situation where work feels right at home. Considering this inescapable sense of the pervasiveness of work, what boundaries should be put in place, or can there really be any boundaries at all?

Fences are constantly being taken down nowadays in the name of technological convenience, but we need to ask – "Why was the boundary there in the first place?"

### THE BOUNDARIES OF KEY PEOPLE

Is life about relationships or is it about results? Human nature is such that we are driven by what is external unless there is the regular discipline of personal reflection.

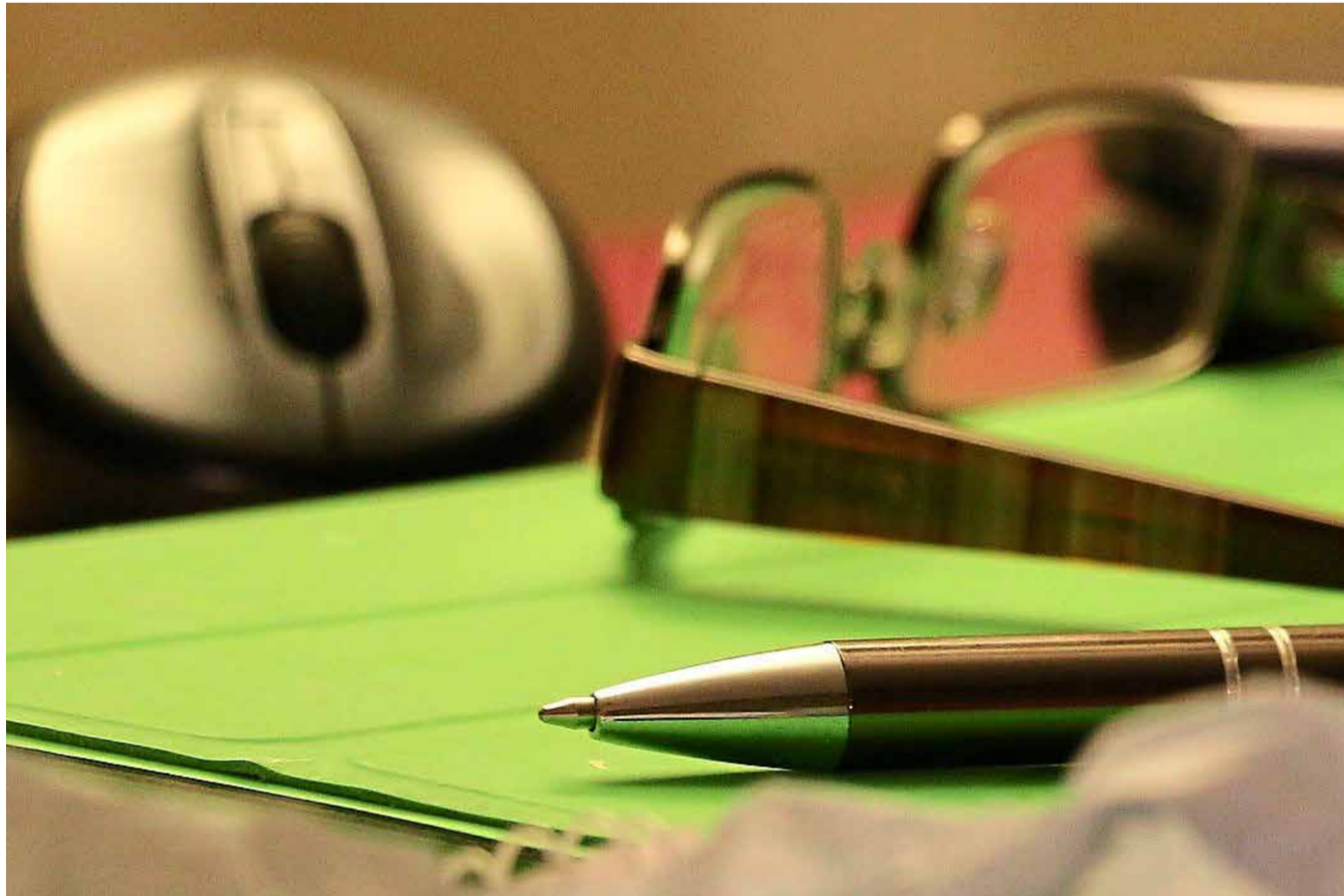
The boundaries of key people in your life are established for three good reasons:

1. They are your source of wisdom and guidance (the senior ones).
2. They are your reasons for leaving a worthwhile legacy (the younger ones).
3. They are grateful for your coaching and contribution (the mentored ones).

If work has reached a point where your predominant thoughts are around your KPI (key performance indicators) instead of the other KPI (key people investments), then we need to retrace our steps and reconsider putting the fence of key relationships back in its rightful place again.

Then again, this is easier said than done because while most of us instinctively desire to establish key people connections, the pressure to make ends meet could override even the best of intentions.

How then is it possible to respect the boundaries of key relationships while fulfilling the job description and challenging



work demands?

### THERE ARE TWO POSSIBLE STRATEGIES.

#### 1 Discover Your Strengths

According to Gallup, people who do focus on their strengths are six times as likely to be engaged in their jobs and more than three times as likely to report having an excellent quality of life in general. When you choose to regularly calibrate your job with your strengths, you are ensuring both professional and personal fulfilment.

#### 2 Date Your Relationships

Someone once said that love is spelt t-i-m-e. My care for someone is reflected in the regularity of scheduled connecting moments.

Often, people end up spending more hours at work not because they want to but due to the fact that our schedule tends to be filled up with the expectations of others if we do not first block off our items of priority. Those who are a slave to time usually have not taken time to select the right master.

### THE BOUNDARIES OF KEY PURPOSES

Recently, I had a conversation with a human resources director who lamented that while there was a grand scheme to transform the company by introducing a palate of tools for measuring almost everything, several employees resigned.

Looking back, it wasn't that the measurements were not important, rather there was no or little effort spent to motivate the employees with a sense of purpose – crystalising the *why* behind the *whats*.

People do rise up to assigned challenges but they first need to rise up from within. Employees at all levels of the organisation need to know – more than just what the company sells – what does the organisation stand for?

More importantly, an employee also needs to know – what does my life stand



for?

### THE FENCE OF KEY PURPOSES IN ONE'S LIFE IS TO SAFEGUARD THE FOLLOWING.

#### 1 Maximise Your Limited Life

If we could live forever and have all worldly wealth, then there is really no need to establish any sense of life purpose. I can do all I want without any regards to any constraints at all.

However, life is not like that – on the contrary, your life is a limited edition. Without purpose and a moral compass, one's life can be wasted away by the incessant demands of repetitive, routine work.

#### 2 Moderate Your Passion

Passion without purpose is like zeal without knowledge. Sometimes, when we get excited about work, we forget about what really works, what really matters.

This is especially needful for leaders who are in the limelight – there is a tendency to work to fulfil the

expectations of the masses that the leader starts to lose sight of his personal life calling. Your passion ought to be fuelled by your purpose, not by popular expectations.

### IT IS ABOUT WELL-BEING

Instead of asking each other – "How busy are you at work?" ask a more probing question – "How well are you doing at work?"

The answer to this question will reveal whether if the right boundaries are in place in your life. The boundaries of key people and key purposes are not meant to restrict you, rather they liberate you.

By focusing on well-being (and not just doing well), it gives a refreshing reminder to all of us that we are an individual first, and then we are an employee.

We are human beings, not a human doings. We work because it enhances our humanity, and if my work reaches a state where it dilutes my humanity, then it is a wake-up call that certain vital boundaries have been removed.

■ 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. Much of what is shared in the article above comes from his work as a Gallup-certified strengths coach. If you would like to enhance the engagement level of your organisation, email joseph.tan@leaderonomics.com for more details.

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# KNOWLEDGE AND INSIGHTS SERIES

MAKING SENSE OF HR IN TODAY'S WORLD AND BEYOND

## TALENTCORP HR NETWORK

TalentCorp is committed to build better and closer partnerships with employers to grow the HR community in Malaysia. Since the launch of the TalentCorp HR Network on Aug 15, 2014, TalentCorp has been working towards strengthening collaboration with employers and enhancing industry participation in talent development programmes. There are four key work streams aligned under TalentCorp's initiatives – **Diversity & Inclusiveness**; **Leadership Development**; **Graduate Employability**; and **HR Capability** (see Figure 1).

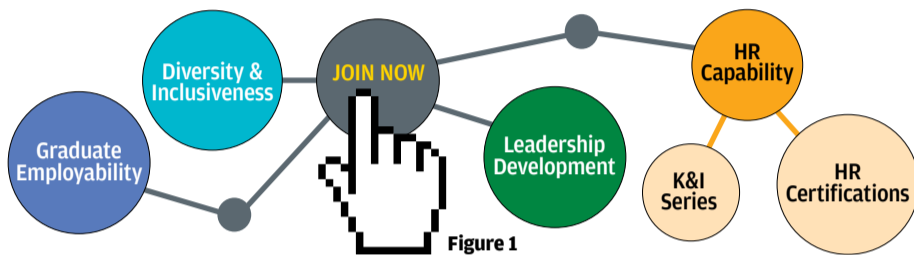


Figure 1

In the space of HR Capability, TalentCorp collaborates with HR leaders and global HR bodies to promote the relevant upskilling programmes and adaptive human capital practices with the aim to build a pipeline of high calibre HR professionals who are business and solution centric in human capital management. This in turn, will better attract, develop and retain top talent for the country's aspiration in becoming a high income, developed nation.

## LIST OF SPEAKERS

### 1st series – Dec 4, 2014

- Lyn Goodear, CEO, Australian Human Resources Institute (AHRI)
- Mary Chua, director of talent and rewards, Towers Watson
- Balan Krishnan, HR director, Altera

### 2nd series – Apr 3, 2015

- Ravin Jesuthasan, managing director and global practice leader, Towers Watson
- Karen Blal, regional director, CIPD
- May Leng Kwok, regional head, CIPD

### 3rd series – May 19, 2015

- Mario Ferraro, regional leader, global mobility, Mercer
- Prof Charles Fine, president, Asia Business School and Chrysler Leaders for Global Operations Professor of Management, MIT's Sloan School of Management

### 4th series – Aug 13, 2015 at Penang

- Dr Kim Schofield, fellow AHRI
- Anil Shivadas, executive director, PwC Consulting Services

### 5th series – Aug 27, 2015

- Peter Cheese, CEO, CIPD
- Lee Yun-Han, senior manager, talent and organisation, Accenture



"K&I is a new platform created by TalentCorp for senior HR professionals to collaborate and network. The intent is to bring forth the new thinking and conversations on human capital development and the way we work. We had great responses so far, with speakers from Towers Watson, CIPD, Mercer and even MIT. Also, one of the topics that has been increasingly topical of late is the future of HR. This is something that TalentCorp wants to understand and play a role in the changing landscape of HR. The exciting times is just beginning."

- **Johan Mahmood Merican, CEO, TalentCorp**



"Very useful. Latest trends. Bite size. Practical. Able to bring back and benefit our organisation. Different views – not just local, but regional too. Best practice. Networking – priceless. Share ideas. Researched. Real. Wake up call."

- **Jenny Ooi, senior vice president, human resource, USG Boral Building Products Sdn Bhd**



"The topics presented were very relevant to current organisation HR trends. TalentCorp takes the trouble to research on the challenges faced by organisations and also looks into the future as to what would be pertinent trends HR professionals should take note of."

- **Monsy Siew, executive director, People, Performance & Culture, KPMG**



"In today's business landscape, often leaders are too busy trying to run the business and that includes HR leaders. The topics selected have been very much in line with the current trends. HR leaders are able to take on different perspectives and build on the internal knowledge within their respective organisations."

- **Nadiyah Tan Abdullah, HR director, Experian Global Development Centre**



"What I appreciated most about these sessions was the insightful topics presented by the professionals which relates to the current HR trend in the market locally and globally. Looking forward for more insightful sessions!"

- **Nor Azliza Abdul Rahman, senior general manager, group human resource division, Felda Global Ventures Holding Bhd**



"The forum of K&I is a great platform where all HR leaders have such opportunity to congregate for networking, sharing of knowledge, ideas, challenges and best practices. It actually creates the sense of belonging as a community of practice of human resources. I am pleased to be part of the community."

HR leaders gathering such as the K&I will definitely bring HR community closer through networking, create a platform where HR leaders share their work experiences about current challenges, best practices, etc, and allow them to hear and learn from the speakers of their respective researched subject and current market trend."

- **Teoh Ewe-Beng, senior HR director, Keysight Technologies (M) Sdn Bhd**

## TRANSFORMATIVE HR

The first Knowledge & Insights (K&I) session in 2015 featured Ravin Jesuthasan (*pic*), managing director and global practice leader for Towers Watson Talent Management Practice. More than 70 HR professionals attended and participated in this session. Based on the book *Transformative HR: How Great Companies Use Evidence-Based Change for Sustainable Advantage* which Ravin co-authored, the session provided five principles to

navigate HR decisions in tackling the growing complexities of the modern workforce.

The five principles are:

1. Logic-driven analytics
2. Segmentation
3. Risk leverage
4. Integration and synergy
5. Optimisation – i.e. high impact vs low impact programmes

**Key takeaways of the K&I session:**

- There is a shift in HR from being a service provider to educating,

enabling and equipping business leaders.

- Effective analysis of workforce data provides answers to an organisation's high-value questions, such as identifying traits and characteristics in successful employees working in business-critical roles.
- Through segmenting the workforce, HR may differentiate sourcing and reward strategies. This shift contributes to business value through the attraction of new talent and retention of critical talent.



Cheese speaking to HR professionals at TalentCorp's K&I series.

## THE FUTURE OF HR

The latest K&I session was held in August 2015 on the topic of "The Future of HR". TalentCorp invited Peter Cheese, CEO of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), to share his views on the future of work.

- **Globalisation and Economic Change** – Organisations are looking for job-ready people, and people who are aligned with organisations' values. At the same time, employees want a greater voice in the workplace and a sense of meaning in the work they do. This leads to implications for people recruitment and development as HR re-thinks the workforce relationship.
- **Technology and Digital** – Social, Mobile, Analytics and Cloud (SMAC) are four technological platforms that drives business innovation and direction. It is imperative for business leaders to optimise these platforms for organisation success.
- **Workforce and Demographics** – HR is a key enabler in developing line managers. There needs to be a mindset shift from controlling employees through policies and rule to empowering employees to take charge of their working life through a set of principles.

To watch the video, please visit [www.youtube.com/watch?v=1F\\_LtjFCusM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1F_LtjFCusM)

## HR COMPETENCIES

TalentCorp held its inaugural K&I session in Penang on Aug 13, 2015 hosted by Keysight Technologies. This series was catered to the northern region companies with more than 50 HR leaders and managers in attendance.

One of the keynote speakers invited was Dr Kim Schofield, a Fellow with the Australian Human Resources Institute (AHRI) who presented "The new HR Competency Model" (see Figure 2). The Model of Excellence builds on three central questions: As HR practitioners, what am I expected to know? What am I expected to do as practising professional? What am I expected to be?

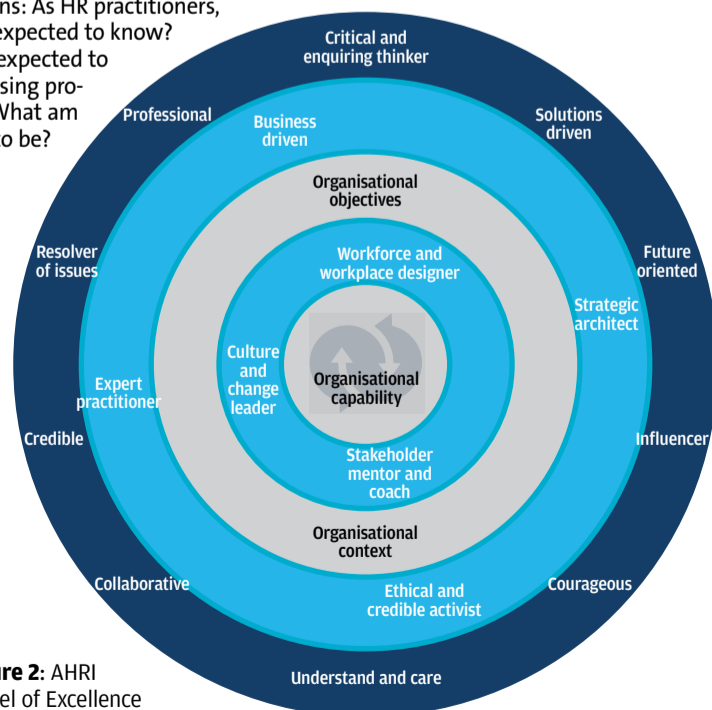


Figure 2: AHRI Model of Excellence

# THE STRATEGIC ROLE OF HR PROFESSIONALS

## HOW HUMAN RESOURCES CAN USE ITS SEAT AT THE EXECUTIVE TABLE

By **SANDY CLARKE & MARY CHUA** (talent and rewards leader, Towers Watson Malaysia) editor@leaderonomics.com

Once upon a time, human resources (HR) professionals would take care of employee administration and keep track of payroll for their organisation. HR professionals had what we might politely term "office jobs", and were seen to be very much separate from the decision-making process of senior management.

Now, decades later, HR professionals are urged to become strategic partners in advising leadership teams, and are being steered towards sitting at the executive table as a crucial part of decision-making. This is largely due to the increasingly global nature of today's workforce, which requires

engagement, innovation, and diversity to manage effectively – qualities that HR professionals need to possess, in order to bring human resources to the next level.

As South-East Asia faces a number of challenges in harnessing top talent to bolster the region's economic performance, there has never been a greater need for investment in HR, nor a more urgent need to recognise not only the vital role HR plays in the success of organisations, but also in the diverse ways in which it plays that role.

Of course, as HR professionals continue to develop and excel in areas such as training and development, its main challenge lies in helping leaders understand the strategic value those areas add to business success, considering business needs when developing their solutions and framing them as such.

## HR AS STRATEGISTS

HR plays a pivotal role in significantly contributing, shaping and influencing the long-term plans of organisations. Key contributions include:

**Conducting strategic workforce planning** such as application of supply chain framework to understand longer term workforce needs and supply, sustaining the talent pipeline, and effectively managing costs, compliance, regulatory and risks considerations

**Minimising any human capital related risks** as part of an organisation's enterprise risk management and to ensure HR practices are sustainable

**Serving as strategic advisers** in mergers and acquisitions or organisational restructuring efforts to ensure exercises are value-accretive from a talent perspective

**Optimising human capital spend** and understanding where to invest to yield the highest business and financial returns

**Shaping and reinforcing** a high performing organisational culture

**Apply understanding** of the business operating model to develop an agile HR strategy and operations

**Develop robust understanding** of complex workforce wants, needs and preferences and balance key stakeholders' interests

## HR AS DATA SCIENTISTS

One of the key enablers for HR to play a strategic role is harnessing technology to mine data that may not be accessible previously, and using this data to draw uncommon insights.



No longer is data analytics solely focused on analysing employee data for lagging indicators like headcount reports and staff attrition rates. Now, they also focus on generating predictive and leading indicators to inform future workforce trends



Using similar customer data analytic concepts, leading organisations are now hiring data scientists to ensure they can place the right people in the right place, at the right time, and at the right cost



HR decision-making will increasingly be backed by data insights, introducing an element of science to the art of people management

## HR AS BRAND AMBASSADORS

Employer branding by organisations can no longer be distinguished from its consumer brand. A well-aligned consumer and employer brand can deliver exponential benefits to the organisation. A strong employer brand allows an organisation to be a talent magnet to hire the best, which will in turn benefit the business as well as to reinforce the brand.



The consumer experience of an organisation's brand promise is very often shaped by interactions with its employees



The 2014 Towers Watson Global Workforce Study also found that increasingly employees expect a consumer-like experience from their employers. No longer do they have the same workforce expectations as the generations before – the HR function will be expected to apply consumer marketing and branding approaches to meet employee needs



Social media has transformed how companies manage their employer branding, and HR will increasingly leverage on this new channel to access untapped talent segments. In tandem with this, HR will also be expected to raise its digital quotient

## HR AS VALUE CREATORS

HR plays a pivotal role in enhancing the value of its human capital assets through strategic talent management efforts and aligned performance management and reward programmes.



Often, companies' share price and valuation can be impacted by unexpected talent movement and merger deals called off due to talent-related concerns – this clearly demonstrates that an organisation's workforce can no longer be simply viewed as a cost item but can be a strategic asset that needs constant investment



Well designed talent management interventions can ensure the firm has a sustainable talent bench strength to deliver on its longer term strategy



Effective performance management and reward programmes which are aligned with shareholders' interests can result in value creation, for instance growth in share price, increased market capitalisation, etc



The value creation would in turn increase the visibility of the company to other potential investors and talent as well



## THE EVOLUTION OF HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES

HR plays a critical role in looking to the future to ensure the sustainability of the organisation's human capital, as well as taking care of the employee experience and engagement within the organisation, while simultaneously being a trusted adviser to the Board and senior management.

Such is the diverse nature of HR in today's business community, HR professionals are key to ensuring that all aspects of business are able to grow, develop and thrive. This is seen through providing a range of services and performing a number of functions in roles such as strategists, data scientists, and brand ambassadors, to name just a few.

### CHIEF EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE OFFICER

- Futurist/ Strategist
- Differentiation-focused
- Employee as value
- Transcend programmes
- Borderless
- Board adviser

### CHIEF HUMAN RESOURCE OFFICER

- Strategic
- Business-focused
- Employee as resource
- Direct programmes
- International
- C-suite level

### VICE PRESIDENT, HR

- Broader
- Organisation-focused
- Employee as resource
- Design programmes
- National
- Vice president level

### PERSONNEL DIRECTOR

- Tactical
- Operationally focused
- Employee as cost
- Implement programmes
- Local
- Manager/director level

## THE FUTURE OF HR

**"One key HR competency of the future will be agility – responding to the changing demands and expectations of businesses and employees; changes in how and where work gets done and what employees want from their employers. Successful HR leaders of tomorrow will be shifting their focus from consistency and control to providing frameworks that allow organisations to categorise employees in terms of their needs, and will customise the employment deal accordingly".**

– Clare Muhiudeen, managing director, Talent & Rewards, Asia Pacific, Towers Watson



## HR IN THE FUTURE: EMERGING COMPETENCIES HR PROFESSIONALS NEED TO HAVE IN PERFORMING THEIR ROLES



## REINVENTING HR: AN EXTREME MAKEOVER

ACCORDING to the "Southeast Asia Human Capital Trends 2015: Leading in the New World of Work" report by Deloitte, talent is in high demand and many organisations struggle to attract or retain the right people with the right skills in the right roles. In this growth environment, human capital issues are critical to ensure organisations have the talent and capabilities to achieve business sustainability, competitiveness and success.

Traditional HR practices such as performance management and leadership and development are undergoing radical changes.

Imagine an organisation where business leaders look to HR for advice as they develop business strategies to drive growth, where HR is considered the developer of talent and leadership across the business and where business leaders

respect and admire the HR professionals as co-leaders of the business.

In Southeast Asia, financial services have led by example, making significant progress in relation to investing in HR talent and development through designing HR functions that deliver business integrated solutions. As Deloitte's report suggests, for many organisations, it's time to "redesign HR with a focus on delivering high-impact business driven solutions, not just efficient HR administration. HR business partners must become trusted advisors to business leaders on people matters with the requisite skills to analyse, consult, and resolve critical business issues."

The research carried out by Deloitte also suggests that there have been pockets of progress seen across industries, with telecommunications and technology companies being the early adopters in imple-

menting new HR delivery models, helping to align HR professionals with business leaders in helping to achieve business goals and objectives. Indeed, HR must partner with business leaders to understand and better define the talent supply and demand specific to their organisation's critical roles. This will allow for the creation and implementation of a clear workforce strategy to determine which skills are better suited to be developed within the existing workforce versus those recruited externally.

In summary, the most proactive organisations are "prioritising their critical talent management challenges and are reinventing their HR functions to better support these areas. HR and business leaders must be bold and innovative to tailor solutions that are effective for their own business objectives and needs."

Source: SEA Human Capital Trends 2015, Deloitte Consulting Southeast Asia  
For enquiries, please contact Daniel Russell, Director, Deloitte Consulting (SEA) at danrussell@deloitte.com | www.deloitte.com  
For the full report, please visit: www2.deloitte.com/us/en/pages/human-capital/articles/introduction-human-capital-trends.html

### ENGAGING

**Performance management:**  
The secret ingredients  
Organisations are replacing traditional performance management with innovative performance solutions.



### REINVENTING

**People data everywhere:**  
Bringing the outside in  
HR and talent organisations are expanding their HR data strategies by harnessing and integrating third party data about their people from social media platforms.



### REIMAGINING

**Simplification of work:** The coming revolution  
Organisations are simplifying work environments and practices in response to increasing organisation and system complexity, and information overload.



### LEADING

**Leadership:** Why a perennial issue?  
Companies are struggling to develop leaders at all levels and are investing in new and accelerated leadership models.



# STRENGTHENING MALAYSIA'S HR TALENT POOL

## HR CERTIFICATION PROGRAMMES

By NINA TI  
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**M**ALAYSIA, in its pursuit towards achieving high income nation status by 2020, will not be able to reach it without having a cadre of HR professionals.

To raise the bar for the HR profession, TalentCorp has joined forces with some of the leading HR certification training providers in the country, providing funding support to employers and opening the door for more involved participation from HR leaders.

This initiative in upskilling the capabilities of HR practitioners is in line with the human capital development strategic reform initiative of the Economic Transformation Programme, which is Malaysia's roadmap towards achieving this economic status by 2020.

One way is to ensure that organisations in the country understand how to strike the right balance between the interests of business and the capacity of its workforce.

Leading employers understand the need for HR certification programmes as part of their human capital masterplan.

These programmes are not merely window dressing to please the eye. They provide essential pre-requisite knowledge and skills for HR professionals, in effect building a sound platform for organisation leaders who have answered the call to action on improving their talent management initiatives.

Since the launch of TalentCorp's partnership with four key HR certification training providers last year, there has been a positive increase in number of participants – from 189 (in 2014) to 267 (as of October 2015).

“HR certification provides “the know” and “the know-how” of good people management and practices. If we can do this right, the interests and wellbeing of the workforce will be well looked after. This further translates into higher productivity, where the business and overall economy will also benefit.”

– Siti Aishah Md Lassim, head, diversity and capability programmes, TalentCorp

“My advice to HR practitioners who are either new or experienced is that they should obtain a HR Certification to improve their fundamentals in HR to add value to the business and gain a competitive advantage.”

– Lim Chee Gay, director, human resources and general affairs, Samsung Electronics Malaysia

“Businesses in Malaysia and other Asia Pacific countries are undergoing significant changes which require HR to step up and engineer, shape and manage some of the business changes. HR certification helps us move up.”

– Datuk Derick Khoo Chin Eu, senior general manager, group human capital, Tan Chong Motor Holdings Bhd

### HOW CAN HR CERTIFICATION HELP YOUR ORGANISATION?

**UPSILL THE CAPABILITIES OF HR PRACTITIONERS IN MALAYSIA**

**INCREASE ADEQUATE PIPELINE OF HR PROFESSIONALS**

**DEVELOP HR PROFESSIONALS TO BE BUSINESS AND SOLUTION CENTRIC**

### HOW TO APPLY?

- 1 Register and make full payment directly with training provider
- 2 Claim 50% of course fees from training provider when employee passes the HR Certification programme
- 3 Claim remaining 50% of course fees from HRDF if you are a HRDF contributor

## CRITERIA FOR EMPLOYER

- Invest in training Malaysian employees on full time employment
- Select HR Certification Programmes which are co-funded by TalentCorp



- AHRI Professional Certification in Human Resources



- Level 3 Certificate in Human Resource Practice
- Level 7 Certificate in Human Resources

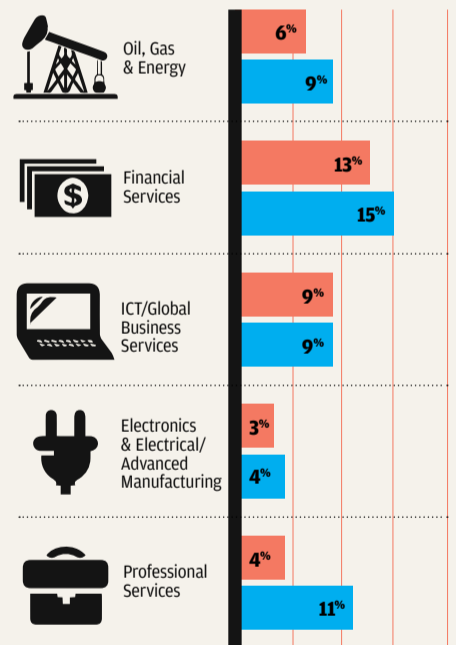


- Certified Human Resource Officer
- Certified Human Resource Manager

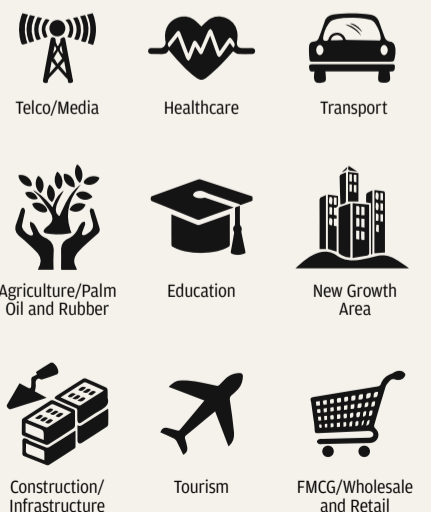


- SHRM Certified Professional
- SHRM Senior Certified Professional

### KEY INDUSTRIES ENROLMENT FOR HR CERTIFICATION



Participation of companies in 2014: 116  
2015: 115 (as of October 2015)



Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) programme in Malaysia is offered by KellyOCG who collaborates with TalentCorp through way of co-funding. SHRM recently held its first graduation for 29 participants on Sep 28, 2015.

Australian Human Resources Institute (AHRI) has achieved 100% passing rate which shows full commitment from the participants to follow through the programmes until completion, towards being a certified HR practitioner. The graduation ceremony on Oct 9, 2015 saw 76 participants receiving their HR certification from Johan Mahmood Merican, CEO of TalentCorp and C M Vignaesvaran, chief executive of HRDF.



Graduates of the SHRM programme offered by KellyOCG



Ecstatic cheers from graduates of the AHRI course organised by K-Pintar Sdn Bhd

By **BRIAN FIELKOW**  
 editor@leaderonomics.com

- “ 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.

# TREATING EMPLOYEES LIKE PALS CAN BE A DANGEROUS GAME

**A**LL of these sayings are age-old advice, but that advice is out of sync with what really happens in our 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 among 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 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. To learn how to set a professional boundary with your employees, email us at training@leaderonomics.com*







# 5 MYTHS OF GREAT WORKPLACES

**HARD TALK**  
IT'S ABOUT TIME WE CHALLENGED CONVENTIONAL WISDOM

By **RON FRIEDMAN**  
editor@leaderonomics.com

**S**UPPOSE that later this evening, after you have stepped away from your keyboard, put on your coat, and travelled home for supper, your organisation underwent a magical transformation, reshaping itself into the world's best workplace.

How would you know? What would be different the next time you entered the building?

When we think about extraordinary workplaces, we tend to think of the billion-dollar companies at the top of Fortune magazine's annual list. We picture a sprawling campus, rich with generous amenities; a utopian destination where success is constant, collaborations are seamless, and employee happiness abounds.

But, as it turns out, many of the assumptions these images promote mislead us about what it means to create an outstanding workplace.

In recent years, scientists in a variety of fields have begun investigating the conditions that allow people to work more successfully.

As I explain in a new book summarising their discoveries, not only are the factors that contribute to creating a great workplace not obvious – often, they are surprisingly counter-intuitive.

Consider these five 'great workplace' myths:

## MYTH 1: EVERYONE IS INCESSANTLY HAPPY

Over the past decade, the happiness literature has produced some compelling findings. Research conducted in lab and field experiments indicated that when people are in a good mood, they become more sociable, more altruistic, and even more creative.

Not surprisingly, many organisations have attempted to capitalise on these outcomes by searching for ways to boost employee happiness. In many ways, it's a welcome trend. Surely, a workplace concerned about the mood of its employees is preferable to the alternative.

But happiness also has a surprising dark side. When we're euphoric, we tend to be less careful, more gullible, and more tolerant of risks.

Not only is workplace happiness occasionally counterproductive, there

is also value to so-called "negative" emotions, like anger, embarrassment, and shame.

Studies indicate that these emotions can foster greater engagement by directing employees' attention to serious issues and prompting them to make corrections that eventually lead to success.

Instead of espousing positivity at all costs, leaders are better off recognising that top performance requires a healthy balance of positive and negative emotions. Pressuring employees to suppress negative emotions is a recipe for alienation, not engagement.

## MYTH 2: CONFLICT IS RARE

Workplace disagreements, many of us implicitly believe, are undesirable. They reflect tension in a relationship, distract team members from doing their jobs, and therefore damage productivity.

But research reveals just the opposite: in many cases, disagreements fuel better performance.

Here's why. Most workplace disagreements fall into one of two categories: **relationship conflicts**, which involve personality clashes or differences in values, and **task conflicts**, which centre on how work is performed.

Studies indicate that while relationship conflicts are indeed detrimental, task conflicts produce better decisions and stronger financial outcomes.

Healthy debate encourages group members to think more deeply, scrutinise alternatives, and avoid premature consensus. While many of us view conflict as unpleasant, the experience of open deliberation can actually energise employees by providing them with better strategies for doing their job.

Workplaces that avoid disagreements in an effort to maintain group harmony are doing themselves a disservice. Far better to create an environment in which thoughtful debate is encouraged.

## MYTH 3: MISTAKES ARE FEW

Suppose you've just been hired to oversee two teams. Before your first day on the job, you receive a report summarising each team's performance during the past year. One statistic immediately jumps out: In the average month, Team A reports five errors. Team B reports 10.

Which team is more effective?

On the surface, the answer seems obvious. Of course Team A is better – after all, the data show they commit half

the number of mistakes. But are fewer errors really the best metric of a team's success?

In the mid-1990s, Harvard researcher Amy Edmondson conducted a study looking at the performance of nursing units at a university hospital. What she expected to find was a simple correlation; one showing that units with the best managers and co-worker relationships recorded the fewest drug treatment errors. Instead, she found the opposite.

Much to Edmondson's surprise, nursing units with better nurse-manager relationships reported significantly more drug treatment errors, but not because they were less effective. They were simply more comfortable admitting mistakes when they happened.

Edmondson's research underscores an important point. To achieve top performance, we must first recognise and learn from our mistakes.

And for that to happen within a workplace context, for employees to willingly acknowledge errors, they need an environment in which it feels safe to have honest dialogue.

Paradoxically, fostering top workplace performance requires a new way of looking at failure. Instead of treating mistakes as a negative consequence to be avoided at all costs (thereby making employees reluctant to acknowledge them), organisations are better off making improvement rather than perfection a primary objective.

## MYTH 4: THEY HIRE FOR CULTURAL FIT

Organisations no longer select job candidates solely on the basis of their skills or experience. They hire those whose personality and values are consistent with their company culture.

Among the more vocal proponents of this approach is Zappos, the online shoe distributor. But lots of other companies have extolled the virtues of hiring for cultural fit.

The idea holds intuitive appeal: When employees share similar attitudes, they're more likely to get along, and more likely they are to produce. Right?

Not necessarily. There's a point at which too much similarity can stifle performance. For one, similarity fosters complacency. We get stuck doing things the way we've always done them because no one is challenging us to think differently.

Similarity also breeds overconfidence. We overestimate the accuracy of our opinions and invest less effort in our decisions, making errors more common.

In a 2009 study, teams of three were asked to solve a problem with the help of a new colleague who was either similar or dissimilar to the existing group. While homogenous teams felt more confident in their decisions, it was the diverse teams that performed best.

The newcomers pushed veterans to re-examine their assumptions and process data more carefully – the very thing they neglected to do when everyone in their group was similar.

Finding the right degree of cultural fit in a new hire is tricky. When the work is simple and creative thinking is rarely required, a homogenous workforce has its advantages. But the same can't be said for organisations looking to be on the forefront of innovation.

Here, exposing people to different viewpoints can generate more value than ensuring that they gel.

## MYTH 5: THEIR OFFICES ARE FULL OF FUN THINGS

On every list of great companies to work for, the top organisations offer lavish amenities. Twitter, for example, has a rock-climbing wall. Zynga lines its hallway with classic arcade games. Google provides a bowling alley, roller-hockey rink, and volleyball courts, complete with actual sand.

Given the frequency with which resort-like workplaces are recognised, it's become easy to assume that to build a great workplace, you need to turn your office into an amusement park.

Not true. To thrive at work, employees don't require luxuries. What they need are experiences that fulfill their basic, human needs. As decades of academic research have demonstrated, we perform at our best when we feel competent, autonomous, and connected to others.

## IN CONCLUSION

What differentiates great workplaces is not the number of extravagant perks. It's the extent to which they satisfy their employees' emotional needs and develop working conditions that help people produce their best work.

For too long, we've relied on assumptions when it comes to improving our workplaces. Isn't it time we looked at the data?

■ Ron Friedman is an award-winning social psychologist who specialises in human motivation. His new book, *The Best Place to Work: The Art and Science of Creating an Extraordinary Workplace*, has been described as 'stunning', 'eye-opening', and 'a contemporary classic', and has been praised by best-selling authors Daniel Pink, David Allen, Marshall Goldsmith, Susan Cain, and Adam Grant. To find out more about his work, visit [www.ignite80.com](http://www.ignite80.com)

# THE FUTURE OF ONLINE RECRUITING

COMPANIES THAT MASTER THE ART AND SCIENCE OF ONLINE RECRUITING WILL ATTRACT AND KEEP THE BEST PEOPLE.

By **NINA TI**  
nina.ti@leaderonomics.com

**O**RGANISATIONS are quickly finding their way into the booming Internet recruiting business. These days, leading employers are marketing jobs online, eager to capitalise on the Internet's enormous power to spread information through informal networking.

In order to attract the right talent, these companies are putting digital collaboration at the heart of their hiring plans – keenly aware that in the next five to 10 years, the Gen Z will be hitting the workforce in large numbers. This emerging generation of hyper-connected, tech-savvy young people will most likely be tapped through Internet-based hiring processes.

According to the *Harvard Business Review*, the trend for employers to market jobs online will be the biggest, most radical change in the war for talent. It serves employers to learn how to win the best employees and gain market share.

If you are interested to learn how your company can promote itself cheaply and effectively in the virtual job market, then a session with one of the foremost consultants on graduate recruitment issues, Adam Shay, might be the thing for you.

Shay leads Alexander Mann Solutions' global consulting services functions, a 100+ strong team of consultants with deep subject matter expertise in employer brand, assessment, diversity, career transition and graduate services.

He will be speaking in Kuala Lumpur on November 12 at the **Malaysia's 100 Leading Graduate Employers Conference**.

In this keynote presentation, Shay will touch on some key topics facing graduate recruitment professionals as they adapt to a digital world where the line between corporate and employer brand is blurring and tech-savvy students are taking a "digital DIY" approach to engaging with your brand.

**KEY TOPICS WILL INCLUDE:**  
Truly experiential marketing – learnings from the consumer world  
Editorial style content generation for the socially enabled world  
Using the assessment and selection process as an engagement tool  
Turning onboarding into a collegiate experience

This event is for you if you would like to help your company drive a digitally-enabled candidate experience.

**Malaysia's 100 Leading Graduate Employers Conference 2015** will take place on November 12 at One World Hotel, Bandar Utama. For sponsorship opportunities or to register for the event, visit [malaysias100.com](http://malaysias100.com)



I've spent my career trying to help organisations build emotional connections with current and future employees; to help them attract and engage top talent that have a lasting effect on the bottom line.  
- Adam Shay



**DID YOU MISS LAST WEEK'S PULLOUT?**

Good news! You can download previous pullouts for free.

Find all your favourite leadership stories at [www.leaderonomics.com](http://www.leaderonomics.com)

## UNLOCKING THE BARRIERS OF COMMUNICATION

with Your Teens

Do you find connecting with your teenager to be a struggle?

Do you try to find common ground but find yourself constantly stuck in a rut?

At Leaderonomics Youth, we are committed to equipping parents with the tools to foster a deep and meaningful relationship with their children.

Our workshop, Unlocking the Barriers of Communication with Your Teens, can help you to move beyond the struggles that teenage years can bring and strengthen the bonds between you and your children.

sign up now at [www.leaderonomics.org/parentworkshop](http://www.leaderonomics.org/parentworkshop) or email [jean.selvam@leaderonomics.com](mailto:jean.selvam@leaderonomics.com) for further questions.



**31 OCTOBER**  
2015 (SATURDAY) | 10AM-12PM

@ **HELP University**

LT 7.19, Level 7, Wisma HELP  
Jalan Dungun, Bukit Damansara, 50490 Kuala Lumpur

Price: RM30

**Jean Selvam** is passionate about working with parents, children and youths from diverse backgrounds. She graduated from *San Diego State University* with a M.Sc in *Counseling*, specializing in *Marriage & Family Therapy*. In addition to being a therapist at *Rekindle Centre*, she is also part of the Youth Programmes team at *Leaderonomics*, a social enterprise with a focus on building leaders of every age. Through the years, she has learned the importance of parental involvement in their children's lives and strives to empower parents to build meaningful relationships with their children.

# LISTEN... LISTEN... LISTEN!

**ACTIVE LISTENING –  
A SKILL THAT EVERY  
PARENT SHOULD  
MASTER**



By **JEAN SELVAM**  
jean.selvam@leaderonomics.com

**O**NE of the most common complaints about teenagers from parents is that their teens do not communicate with them.

As a therapist, I have met many perplexed and upset parents who feel that their children refuse to share stories about their lives.

My general response to them is that teenagers typically prefer to keep to themselves or to confide in their peers. On the other hand, I have also met many teenagers who say that they do not feel heard, neither do they feel safe and comfortable talking to their parents – so what is the point?

These statements made me wonder about the parent-child dynamic, and what is actually occurring on both sides that has led them to a place of non-communication.

### TAKE THE TIME TO LISTEN

Parents complain of the lack of communication and teens grumble about their parents not listening to them. Now, this is a vicious cycle isn't it?

When one party speaks, the other party should listen and provide the assurance that the other's words are being heard. If not, the person speaking will eventually feel misunderstood, disregarded and ultimately stop talking, thereby making the other person feel shut out.

The act of listening, understanding

and giving assurance is also known as "active listening". It is a communication skill that can bring greater connection, cooperation, clarity and understanding to relationships.

Many of us have heard about active listening, but how exactly does having this skill help in a parent-child relationship?

Let's begin by looking at things from your own perspective, with regard to your personal relationships, whether it is with a partner, a sibling, a friend or a colleague.

Imagine feeling distressed and upset about a particular situation, and you decide to confide in your partner. While you are talking, your partner is busy multi-tasking and barely looks at you, besides giving you some nods, saying "hmmm" and "oh really". How would you feel during this one-sided conversation? If you continually receive this feedback, would you approach this person again to share or consult with about events in your life, be it good or bad?

Going back to the question above on how active listening can help cultivate a close parent-child relationship, some of the most important things that will occur is having mutual respect, understanding, and trust between the parent and the child.

Children will learn that no matter what their parent is doing, mum or dad will prioritise them and put their full focus on the conversation. The children will thus feel respected and understood by their parents.

As time goes by, no matter how big or small a problem is, children will feel comfortable enough to confide in their parents, because they trust they will actively listen to them with an open heart and open mind.

### PICKING UP ON SILENT CUES

Active listening encourages the parent to pick up on a lot more of the non-verbal communication: tone of voice, eye contact, facial expressions, body language, and noticing what's not being said through hesitation in the voice.

It's all too easy to view communication in terms of facts and ignore the all-important emotional information. It will then come as no surprise when, through active listening, there is more empathy between the parent and the children during challenging or stressful conversations.

Empathy can help to soften the approach and de-escalate a conflictual situation, because there is more understanding of feelings and their underlying meanings.

When a parent uses active listening, children generally feel more supported and less controlled. It's hard for parents to resist giving endless advice and lectures, as they feel the huge responsibility of teaching their child.

But then again, how do your teens react when the conversation turns one-sided again with all the advice you're giving? Do they feel better when a parent tells them what to do?

Most times, I wonder if your children want to be told what to do or would they

prefer having a conversation with you about their difficulties.

Active listening will slow down the need to give advice and create assumptions, and will instead create a space for your children to feel safe and supported to share their worries.

Parents can guide, facilitate, reflect and support without taking over control of their children's problems. As a result, children who feel respectfully listened to tend to seek their parent's advice and guidance much more often.

### CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Parents are often baffled as to why their children will shut down and refuse to speak or interact when they're clearly troubled. Parents know how much they love their children, and they hope or expect that their children can trust them enough for comfort.

Yet, many of the responses from parents, including well-meaning advice or discipline, inadvertently give children the message that their feelings are not valued, cared for or understood. Those aren't the messages any parent would want to send to their children.

At the end of the day, if you actively listen to your children, a stronger relationship develops.

This is a skill that can be learned and can truly transform how your children talk and listen to you.

A new approach to engaging with your children will generally improve the quality of two-way communication and cooperation.

■ Jean has a background in marriage and family therapy and has worked with a variety of people. She believes that everyone has strengths and can be empowered to lead a life filled with positivity, strength and true happiness. If you would like to find out how you can leverage your strengths and manage your weaknesses in your personal or professional life, please email her at [jean.selvam@leaderonomics.com](mailto:jean.selvam@leaderonomics.com)



The **working dead**



Innovative **working methods**



Is your corporate culture a **Halloween nightmare?**



#21MADDays of **giving and sharing**

## Also next week