

# GLOBAL Leaders TODAY

Issue 6 | Volume 1

June 2021

## THE AWESOME SERIES

From Tackling  
Challenges To  
Rising Above

### ALSO INSIDE

Lessons From The  
Corporate Rebel -  
Semco


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Do Less While  
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## From the Editor

Dear Readers,

As we at Global Leaders Today continue our mission to be a resource for you, our readers, we invite and value your feedback. We welcome your ideas on what you would like to see in the magazine in our upcoming issues! You can reach out to us using our email address mentioned below.

Just like the man featured on the cover of this issue is full of surprises himself! How Neil Pasricha embarked on his mission to happiness is a tale that is a must-read for everyone in the 21st century struggling with work, stress and never-ending problems. Read his story to be inspired by his approach to life.

In this issue, we took a look at one of the biggest empires in the 80s and the many treasures the company Semco held. While also discovering profitability in sustainability with articles such as Business And Oceans and our favourite this pandemic season, Do Less While Achieving More, gives excellent insights on how to boost productivity while maintaining optimum levels of mental health.

Lastly, we would like to request you to subscribe to our monthly magazine at [www.globalleaderstoday.online](http://www.globalleaderstoday.online) for a hassle-free reading experience. And once again, we would like to invite you to share your inspiring stories with us, and we would be delighted to publish them in our magazine.

Warm Regards,  
**Sherlyn Gomes**  
 Editor at Global Leaders Today

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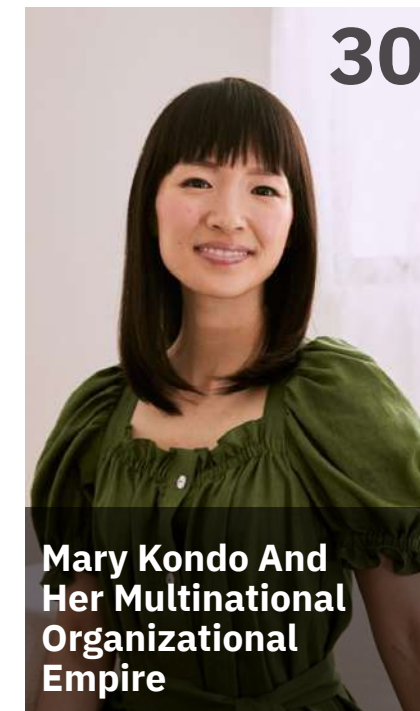
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## COVER STORY

# The Awesome Series

Neil Pasricha is a renowned Canadian Author, Entrepreneur, Podcaster, and Public Speaker advocating for positivity and the simple pleasures that life has to offer. He is best known for 'The Happiness Equation' and 'The Book of Awesome Series', which are international bestsellers based on his personal experience of overcoming challenges in his life. He is also a famed speaker, and his TEDx talk, 'The 3 A's of Awesome', is currently ranked as the ninth most inspiring TEDx talk with over 3 million views to date.

Written by Sherlyn Gomes



Image Credit: Globalhappiness.org

Neil Pasricha was born in Oshawa, Ontario, to an immigrant family. His mother is originally from Nairobi, Kenya; his father is from Amritsar, India; they shifted to Canada in their early 20's for better prospects. Pasricha said, "Much of my wonder and amazement for the world comes from my immigrant parents and their perspective on seeing everything for the first time in Canada." In his Tedx Talk, he speaks about the sheer wonder and excitement his father experienced after reading the name tag on the fruits in the supermarket and finding out that the dates were imported from Morocco, a country he hadn't heard of, yet he was eating their produce.

Pasricha then went on to study at Queen's University and Harvard University earning a degree in Business. Pasricha then spent a decade running Leadership Development and working directly for two CEOs at Walmart, the world's largest company. He was responsible for CEO onboarding, executive development, and talent management across all levels of the organization.

Pasricha had everything working out for him till 2008. He was dealing with a troubled marriage. He said in his Ted Talk, "One day my wife came home from work and summoned the courage through a lot of tears to have a very honest conversation, and she said, 'I don't love you anymore.'" Pasricha

People should try a new hobby every Saturday. Don't just play one sport; play eight. Always have something new that you are doing and sucking at because that will dramatically accelerate your learning rate.

recalled, "it was one of the most painful things I've ever heard. and certainly the most heartbreaking thing I've ever heard." He continued, "I later discovered that was indeed not the most heart breaking thing to ever happen to me, just a month later, my very good friend Chris, who had been dealing with mental illness for some time took his life and committed suicide. I was shattered"

Pasricha soon fell into depression and said, "2008 and 2009 were the toughest years for him." As a countermeasure to get him out of his depression, Pasricha went home from work one day and created a blog dedicated to appreciating and recording the small pleasures that

Image Credit: GlobalHapiness.Org



Image Credit: Neil Pasricha

life has to offer — getting a green light on your way home from work, wearing warm briefs straight out of the dryer, being the first table to get called up for the dinner buffet at a wedding or waiters and waitresses who bring free refills without asking.

Starting out, the blog had only one reader - his mom. However soon he saw his blog getting ten hits that went to a dozen, then a hundred, and soon he hit a million.

He soon woke up to a call informing him that he had won the award for The Best Blog In The World. Pasricha did not believe it at first, but a month later, he was on a flight to receive his first Webby, walking down the red carpet and standing with the likes of Sarah Silverman and Jimmy Fallon. Due to his immense success with the blog, he was approached by many literary agents to turn the contents of his blog into a book. The Book of Awesome was published

in 2010 and immediately became a #1 international bestseller and a New York Times bestseller.

'You Are Awesome' is all about resilience against failures. Pasricha used his life experiences to highlight the secrets to developing resilience in an era of increasing anxiety, depression and loneliness.

In his book, Pasricha explains, "A key part of happiness is learning how to deal



Image Credit: The Institute for Global Happiness

with failure. Something the convenience of technology has made people forget."

"You can press a button these days and a car whisks you home. You have takeout waiting on your front porch. Your cell phone entertains you. We live like kings," Pasricha said. "But the side effect of living like that is that we no longer have the tools to handle failure or even perceived failure."

When Pasricha worked at Walmart, part of his job was to help people who were fired pack their belongings and walk them to their cars. After losing their jobs, people often drew the conclusion that their lives were over, he said. But years later, many of them have told him getting fired from the company was a blessing.

"We all catastrophize. We think where we are today is where we're gonna be forever. Unfortunately, that means if you lost your job or you got dumped or something went bad, you think you're

stuck there," Pasricha says. "But use the end-of-history illusion to actually reimagine that this could be a step towards a future that you just can't see yet."

In an era governed by the internet and social media, people's mental health is plummeting as it leads to comparisons that eventually leads to envy and disdain.

"No matter how good the lunch you and I have together today, somebody's at a lobster buffet in the Maldives on Instagram. So you are in a permanent state of anxiety because you can't win anymore," Pasricha said. "You're comparing everybody else's greatest hits with your director's cut life."

Pasricha explained his philosophy of people should fail more often to succeed; he said, "A recent study showed that [many] Nobel Prize winners are also amateurs at entirely unrelated disciplines. They're amateur ballroom

dancers or amateur photographers. The researchers found that when you do more things, you open your mind to being successful in the things you already do. A good example is Steve Jobs doing calligraphy at Reed College and how that affected the typography that went into Apple computers.

People should try a new hobby every Saturday. Don't just play one sport; play eight. Always have something new that you are doing and sucking at because that will dramatically accelerate your learning rate."

In conclusion, Pasricha said, "Life is so great that we only get a tiny moment to enjoy everything we see. And that moment is right now. And that moment is counting down. And that moment is always, always fleeting. You will never be as young as you are right now." So live every minute making memories that you will cherish for a lifetime.



# The Icon Of Resilience

After she lost her legs to bacterial meningitis, Amy Purdy struggled with depression and hopelessness. She only overcame the ordeal when she learned to accept her new reality beyond any limitations that she had inflicted on herself. Today, Purdy is a renowned World Champion Female Adaptive Snowboarder. In 2005, she co-founded Adaptive Action Sports, a nonprofit dedicated to introducing people with physical challenges to action sports.

*Written by Alexis Miller*

Image Credit: Wikipedia Commons

Amy Purdy has lived an extraordinary life paved with adversities that she turned into stepping stones for success. Since a young 15-year-old, she has always been a passionate snowboarder. At 19, her life took a detour when she left her job early working as a massage therapist one day with what she thought was the flu. Purdy was soon rushed to the hospital in a state of septic shock. Once admitted, the doctors said her chances of survival were less than 2%. She was immediately put on life support and placed into a coma for better chances of recovery.

When Purdy's abdomen became distended, her doctors realized that she was suffering from internal bleeding, and it was just a matter of time before her spleen would burst. She was then rushed into emergency surgery to rectify the cause.

Purdy briefly died during that intense surgery. She said, "I remember thinking, 'I know these people are here to save me, but I am going. I am going right now.' And it felt as if I was hanging on by my fingertips. And every heartbeat, I was moving closer and closer to the edge. All of a sudden, I felt my last heartbeat."

After the ruptured spleen removal and multiple blood transfusions, the doctors diagnosed Purdy with Meningococcal Meningitis, a vaccine-preventable bacterial infection. Due to the lack of blood circulation, the doctors had to amputate both her legs below the knee. A week before her 21st birthday, she received a donated kidney from her father, which she calls the greatest gift of her life.

After her recovery, Purdy fell into depression. However, she was determined not to let her amputation stop her from tearing up the slopes and pursuing her passion for snowboarding. "In order to move forward, I knew I had to let go of the old Amy somehow and learn to embrace the new Amy," she said.

However, it wasn't an easy task. Her first pair of prosthetics were crude and not made for someone with aspirations of competitive snowboarding. Purdy said they looked like the pair had come straight from Home Depot. She recalled

Purdy's creativity, positive outlook and never-give-up attitude have opened doors to many avenues, including acting as the lead role in an award-winning independent film and multiple creative modelling projects and also being featured in a Madonna music video.

saying to herself: "These can't be the legs that I'm going to live the rest of my life in."

It took trial and error to develop the perfect pair of prosthetics that were fit for competitive snowboarding. Fortunately, Purdy could compete and medal at the USASA National Snowboarding Championship just a few months after her kidney transplant surgery. She performed skillfully and went on to earn a bronze medal at the 2014 Paralympics in Sochi.

She then channelled her fierce determination into Adaptive Action Sports. This nonprofit organization hopes to spread the message that "the 'disabled' can 'live beyond their limits'" the way Purdy does every single day. AAS provides training for adaptive athletes and certifies instructors with the ultimate goal of increasing respect and helping differently-abled people live a normal life. AAS and Purdy have also developed relations with the USA Snowboarding Association and created an adaptive division. They have advocated for similar divisions internationally.

Purdy's creativity, positive outlook and never-give-up attitude have opened doors to many avenues, including acting as the lead role in an award-winning independent film and multiple creative modelling projects, being featured in a Madonna music video, doing a photo shoot with artist and musician Nikki Sixx where her legs were custom made to look like ice picks from steel.

During her incredible journey in the past two decades, Purdy has evolved into a powerful motivational and inspirational speaker sharing her story with millions of people worldwide. Amy's TED x Orange Coast talk, 'Living Beyond Limits', is the number one recommended video

by TED x OC to incoming TED speakers formulating their presentations.

Despite the incredible turnaround of her life, Amy didn't expect to collide with yet another medical challenge in 2019- a vascular injury in her left leg that was a blood clot stretching from her hip to the bottom of her leg.

The injury prohibited Purdy from wearing her prosthetic on her left leg as the leg could not take the pressure. Doctors initially told Purdy that to treat the clot, she could either amputate what was left of her leg or have a procedure that could destroy her kidney that she received as a transplant from her father to save her life 20 years ago.

"That was hard," Purdy said. "I had a big choice to make ... I was fighting for my life 20 years ago, but this [time] I was fighting for the quality of my life. I couldn't imagine not snowboarding again, not walking again. I couldn't accept it," Purdy said.

One year after her diagnosis, Purdy could walk again thanks to her 'angel' surgeons Dr Michael Cooper and Dr Omar Mubarak. She credits Dr Cooper with saving her leg, while Mubarak found alternative therapies to help her heal. "I just looked at her and said we're gonna look at things outside the box," Mubarak told Good Morning America. She's young, she's strong, she can handle the clot-buster that we essentially put down there."

Purdy is back on her feet and continues to be a voice for others who share the same experiences as her. She said in conclusion, "Don't look at us like we're amputees, we're already damaged. Look at us like we're humans."

# NEWS

## Barcelona Church Opened Its Doors To Muslims During Ramadan



As a perfect gesture of communal harmony, a church in Barcelona opened its doors for Muslims breaking their fast during the holy time of Ramadan. As the country prohibited gatherings at indoor venues, the Catholic church offered its open-air spaces for Muslims to eat and pray together.

Every evening around 50 to 60 people, many of them homeless, visited the centuries-old stone passages of the Santa Anna church, where volunteers offered a hearty iftar meal for free. The volunteers cooked fresh meals, usually consisting of harira, which is a traditional soup from Morocco, that has meat, lentils, chickpeas, celery, parsley, coriander, tomato, onion and spices. Father Peio Sanchez, Santa Anna's rector, who allowed the church premises to be used, sees the meeting of different faiths as emblematic of civic coexistence.

"Even with different cultures, different languages, different religions, we are more capable of sitting talking than some politicians," the Catholic priest said.

## New Zealand Weightlifter Set To Become First Transgender Olympic Athlete

The International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) has revised its qualifying requirements for Olympic selection due to COVID-19 after a meeting. It has changed the prerequisite of athletes requiring to attend only four competitions instead of the previous six, which puts New Zealand weightlifter Laurel Hubbard on her way to becoming the first transgender athlete to compete at an Olympics.

Hubbard, 43, has competed in men's weightlifting competitions before the transition in 2013. She had met the eligibility criteria to compete in the Olympics since 2015 when the International Olympic Committee issued guidelines allowing any transgender athlete to compete as a woman provided her testosterone levels are below ten



nanomoles per litre for at least 12 months before her first competition.

"The NZOC can confirm that revised International Federation qualification systems are very likely to see a number of New Zealand weightlifters, including Commonwealth Games transgender athlete Laurel Hubbard, allocated an IF quota spot for Tokyo 2020," the NZOC said in a statement.

## South Africa Announced Plans To End Captive Lion Breeding

On Sunday, May 3rd, The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment in South Africa took steps toward ending the country's captive lion breeding industry. Starting by ending new permits for new captive lion facilities, and revoking any current permits, Rachel Fobar reports for National Geographic.

The decision came alongside a 600-page report of recommended changes to wildlife management policies in the area. The report recommended implementing bans on keeping lions in captivity, breeding and using them in tourist interactions and enclosed lion hunts. Next, the parliament will decide whether to turn the recommendations into laws. The recommendations have government support, so the announcement has been seen as a huge victory for both animal



welfare and lion conservation.

"This is a significant shift in thinking, and it's far, far greater than anyone would have thought a year ago, or even six months ago," says Ian Michler, director of Blood Lions, a nonprofit organization that has advocated for ending captive lion breeding in South Africa, to Elizabeth Claire Alberts at Mongabay. "And it's the first time we believe that we have a ministry or government that is really committed to dealing with these issues."

## Uganda Joined African Nations And Is Using Drones to Deliver Life Saving Medical Supplies to More Than 22 Million People



On the 84 remote islands that make up Uganda's Kalangala District on the surface of Lake Victoria, medical experts are tackling one of Africa's worst provincial HIV crises with the help of cargo drones. Using these drones is called a 'game changer,' and while Victoria is a lake, it's so big that a passenger ferry needs 16 hours to cross it. Adding up the total time with various stops for navigation around the islands leads to a huge waste of time that could have ideally saved a life.

Developed by the Academy For Health Innovation Uganda and costing around \$5,500 each, the drones launched last week for the first time—and will service 78 separate community groups and health facilities across the widely scattered Ssesse islands, with about 200 scheduled flights per month.

Uganda isn't alone in the project, as Rwanda and Ghana also use medical supply drones to reach far off communities. Together, the technology promises a faster and more reliable way to deliver life-saving drugs and supplies to more than 22 million Africans.

## California Hit 95% Renewable Energy On a Recent Day Across 80 Percent of the State

For approximately four seconds on April 29, California got 95% of its power from renewable energy—with the Golden State using about 90% renewables in the afternoon hours during a period of warm, cloudless weather.

While caveats such as not including Sacramento or Los Angeles in the percentage dampens the milestone, it still means over 29 million people were contributing virtually nothing towards climate change as far as their electricity needs were concerned. The clean energy counter also didn't include the Diablo Canyon nuclear plant, which indeed at the moment is producing nothing more than steam as emissions. Combine it with geothermal, hydroelectric, and biomass production, and 100% of the state grid was occupied with these renewables



during daylight hours. "It sends chills down my spine. It's amazing," said Elliot Mainzer, President and CEO of the California Independent System Operator, which runs the state's primary power grid. "These types of transitions aren't always pretty. But we're getting a lot of renewable generation online, making a real dent in the state's carbon emissions," he told the LA Times.

## A Study Revealed 7 in 10 Americans Agree That 2020 Made Them a Better Person

According to a new survey conducted by OnePoll in conjunction with Eyes of Hope, the charitable arm of VSP Global, 74% of Americans said that 2020 has made them more aware of other's needs—and more selfless than before. A poll of 2,005 Americans revealed that since March 2020, people are embracing the idea of neighbourly love.

Some examples include: 87% of Americans have donated a portion of their paycheck, even though three in five experienced financial difficulties. 41% have helped a stranger. 38% have gone out of their way to take out their neighbour's trash, and 31% have walked their neighbour's dog. And, for those who live in chilly climates, 1/3rd have shovelled out a neighbour's car in the past year. In general, 72% said they found themselves caring about the health and well-being of others significantly



more in the past year.

"It's been incredibly meaningful to see how the challenges of the last year have caused us to care even more for each other," stated Pat McNeil, a Spokesperson for VSP Eyes of Hope. "This study validates what we've been hearing from our employees and charitable partners: people are looking to better the lives of others and their communities because they envision a greater purpose after such a devastating year."

## Fidelity Allows Teens To Trade Stocks With New Accounts



Fidelity Investments has expanded its no-fee investing accounts to a new age group: teenagers, with parental permission and guidance. The investing firm announced on Tuesday, May 18th the opening of Fidelity Youth Account, a brokerage account specially designed to help kids aged 13 to 17 save, spend and invest. The accounts are available to teenagers whose parents or guardians have Fidelity accounts and allow young people to save, as well as buy and sell U.S.-listed stocks, most exchange-traded funds and Fidelity mutual funds.

The account comes with a debit card and allows teenagers to trade with no account commissions or fees. Parents will be able to monitor activity, which Fidelity says will help start conversations about personal finance and investments with their children.

“Our goal for the Fidelity Youth Account is to encourage young Americans to learn through action and foster meaningful family conversations around financial topics,” said Jennifer Samalis, Senior Vice President of Acquisition and Loyalty at Fidelity Investments, in a statement.

## Europe Plans To Reopen For Travel, Easing Rules For American Tourists



The European Union has agreed to allow quarantine-free travel for vaccinated visitors and tourists from countries deemed safe, making way for reopening hassle-free trans-Atlantic flights. Ambassadors from the EU's 27 member states supported the proposal to waive quarantine for those with coronavirus inoculations approved by their drug regulators, including shots from Johnson & Johnson, Pfizer Inc. and Moderna Inc.

The approval could be finalized in the fourth week of May and implemented soon

after. According to two officials familiar with the decision, unvaccinated travellers can also avoid quarantine if they come from countries that have managed to control the COVID-19 outbreak, meaning a 14-day new-case rate of less than 75 per 100,000.

This would likely land the U.S. on a ‘white list’, which is due to be adopted later this week. But with so many Americans already vaccinated, the designation may be less important to the travel industry than whether American officials reciprocate and loosen rules for European visitors.

## The Little Island, Barry Diller’s \$260m Public Park, Opens For Public

From Manhattan’s West Side Highway, the Little Island looks like a cluster of giant white flower buds sprouting from the Hudson River. But the 2.4-acre park—conceived and mostly paid for by billionaire Barry Diller through his Diller-von Furstenberg Family Foundation—is an undulating platform of grass, trees and winding pathways mounted on concrete piles where Pier 54 used to be.

When it opens to the public on May 22nd, visitors will be able to enter from 6 a.m. to 1 a.m. year-round via two bridges that connect the structure to the Hudson River Greenway and roughly correspond

to 14th and 13th streets. The most dramatic approach is from the southern entrance through an arch covered in plants and trees.

Once visitors cross the water and come inside, they’ll find that the Little Island was designed for exploration, novelty and discovery, said Trish Santini, the park’s Executive Director. “That’s a really thoughtful aspect of the design,” Santini said. “There are different views of the city, views of the water, views of people and views of the landscape. You’re digesting a different element of the experience.”

## Indian Riders Have Started Delivering Oxygen And Groceries To Help Fight COVID-19



With many cities under lockdown, local riders have volunteered to deliver medicines, groceries and meals to the elderly and families under quarantine due to the COVID-19 pandemic. One group of cyclists, the Relief Riders, have expanded across eight cities, including Bengaluru and Mumbai and use algorithms to match delivery requests with a nearby volunteer for efficiency of services.

“In the last two weeks, we have added volunteers. In Bengaluru city alone, we have more than 200,” said Sathya Sankaran, the Organiser of Relief Riders and the ‘bicycle mayor’ of Bengaluru city. “We figured that shortages will ease if we can help people stay indoors and stay safe,” said Sankaran, who also runs Urban Morph, a social enterprise that works to increase mobility in urban areas.

## Indonesian Women On A Mission To Save Planet

Aisiyah is an Indonesian organisation that has almost 4 million members branched throughout the country. After a drought dried up all the wells in the region, members of ‘Aisiyah purchased gallons of water from the local utility for affected households and started working on their mission to plant more trees and help the land flourish.

‘Aisiyah ran a ‘Green Ramadan’ programme that held evening talks on how families can reduce waste and use of plastic during the Islamic fasting month. “It is explained in the Koran that it is important to do good in the month of Ramadan,” Rahma Susanti, Head of the LLHPB in West Kalimantan province said in an interview. “Protecting our ecosystem and environment is one of these good things.”

In Sumatra’s Riau province, the group is preparing to work with the national peatland and mangrove restoration agency to rehabilitate degraded land and forests. While women volunteers in



Kalimantan are simultaneously helping with wildfire prevention efforts.

## Scientists Have Developed A Personalized Anti-Cancer Vaccine That Works in Mice

A research team in Montreal has been busy developing a personalized anti-cancer vaccine that works in mice. At the University of Montreal Hospital Research Centre (CRCHUM), Marie-Claude Bourgeois-Daigneault and her team have modified viruses to make them specific to the cells of a tumour that can be attacked and destroyed.

Once in the patient’s body, these viruses—called oncolytic viruses—infect and destroy only the cancer cells without touching healthy cells. These viruses can stimulate the immune system to be better armed to recognize and kill malignant cells. This is what’s known as immunotherapy.



In a study published in Nature, the researchers have shown how they came to create an effective personalized vaccine by combining the oncolytic viruses with small synthetic molecules (peptides) specific to targeted cancer to fight the cancer epidemic.

# The Man With The Extraordinary Vision

Dr Oleg Konovalov is a Global Thought Leader, Author, Business Educator, Consultant, and C-Suite Coach with over 25 years of experience operating businesses and consulting Fortune 500 companies both in the UK and internationally. He has been named 'the da Vinci of Visionary Leadership' by many leading authorities of our time. Dr Konovalov empowers companies to create and execute their vision, maintain a strong, productive corporate culture and achieve superior business performance.

*Written by Sherlyn Gomes*

**D**r Oleg Konovalov was born and raised in Murmansk, located in the northern part of Russia, just above the arctic circle surrounded by scenic beauty and wild nature that he thinks was a compelling experience. Dr Konovalov recalled, "I was brought up in the former Soviet Union, where all people were restricted in terms of freedom of their source of what they can do. These restrictions made me think, what I could do differently, or how we could do things differently. It's like being caged, to be placed in a box and expected to be happy. It wasn't about happiness."

He continued, "Kids those days just accepted to be happy. You know how much we understand about happiness when we are kids? Actually, only when we mature we try to find happiness. And then you realize that it's not about happiness. It's about freedom."

Living in the Soviet Union taught Dr Konovalov an important lesson about freedom. Talking on the subject, he said, "There was no freedom there. When you shift to a different place, you realize there is a concept of freedom, freedom of your thoughts, that you can do something beyond your most limiting beliefs, something that has never been explored or done before. And you realize you are capable of it. That has been the main driving force for me, and inspired me to work for freedom and liberty, where no

one could tell me you shouldn't do this."

In pursuit of more liberating prospects, Dr Konovalov shifted to the United Kingdom when he was 28. And he says that was when he realized the world is much greater than we perceive it to be. He explained, "When we live in one country, we don't realize much of the greatness of this world. When we move to another country, we learn to think in a different language. So our mind is growing. Our understanding of the world is growing; we become more grateful for our lessons. Yes, we become stronger. And you immediately realize that everything that you have learned was relevant to one country and you must learn again so you can become relevant for a new country and the world at large. And that drove me to study again and again and again and again." Dr Konovalov had previously obtained his Diploma from Russia. However, in his quest for continuous education, he started studying for a Diploma in the UK which led to a Master's Degree and eventually to a Doctoral degree.

Dr Konovalov describes his work experience as colourful; his first job was at a deep-sea trawler engine room in the United Kingdom which pushed him to cultivate an entrepreneurial spirit, resilience to face challenges and agility to keep evolving.

It was during this time that he stumbled upon a life-changing opportunity.

His company was looking for a resource to explore the international market in Eastern Europe. Dr Konovalov grabbed the opportunity by insisting that he had the business competence and the people skills to crack the market. Within no time, he was promoted as the Sales Manager followed by the Eastern Europe Sales Director.

Looking back, Dr Konovalov reflects that it wasn't the case of merely an opportunity presenting itself. It was a classic case of an opportunity crossing the path of a prepared mind that allowed him to assess the opportunity and leverage it to its full capacity!

Dr Konovalov spent the next two decades holding top managerial positions at Icebrit Limited, SeaForce and Nord Fresh Limited, where he learnt a great deal about crafting effective business strategies and growing companies. During that time, he was also

called to share his expertise as a Lecturer and Visiting Professor at various colleges in Russia that would later translate into his passion for consulting companies.

After accumulating tremendous work experience, he said, "I had learnt quite a lot and I was yearning to share my knowledge with others. I decided I will start consulting and help companies do better in their field. Soon my friends persuaded me to write my first book to share my experience with a much larger audience."

After writing four best-sellers, Dr Konovalov has now written his fifth book, *The Vision Code*, published in 2021. Talking about the book, he says, "It will be important because we need visionary leadership. It was challenging to reveal the nature of vision, to turn it into a practical business tool, and share the mindset of visionaries with my readers. Because thinking about the concept of vision, and putting that into action are two very different things. This work impacted me more than anything else I have done in my life. And it will definitely help everyone else as well."

He explained that each one of us has a great asset; that is life itself, but it is given to us, and it is then up to us to make it meaningful. But to do that, we must have a vision, a vision for our personal life and a vision for our businesses. Dr Konovalov said, "Vision is a field that was hardly explored, and I took a risk. And it was quite challenging. Because I think, for instance, when we talk about love, it is too big a concept to explain. I wouldn't touch it. But most people can hardly explain what love is, it is the same with vision. People had huge difficulties expressing what vision is, how to apply it, how to create it and how to make it."

Dr Konovalov had a demanding experience articulating the nature of vision but succeeded with an insightful book that has become a pragmatic business tool for managers and leaders all across the world.

In conclusion, Dr Konovalov shares his advice for all budding leaders; he says, "We are greater than we think. We all have visionary traits. And my advice is simple. Don't allow anyone to silence your vision."



## NEWSMAKERS



## Tom Kearin

Founder/CEO  
Be Something Wonderful

Tom is an inspirational and passionate International Entrepreneur, Motivational Speaker, Consultant, Coach, Adviser, Mentor, Author, Teacher and Trainer. His business leadership spans a variety of fields including personal and professional development, technology, computer design and manufacturing amongst others.

**“Suddenly what you have been just isn’t good enough. You were born to be great, to be something wonderful.”**

With those words, Tom launched ‘Be Something Wonderful’ in January 2016, a coaching and consulting organization helping others become the best version of themselves. He believes that if he can help just one person become a better version of themselves, that is, see the love and light within them—the effect rings throughout the world and eternity. He said, “I have always known there is a greater work that I am supposed to be doing, and I have always felt this greater work must start with me.”

Be Something Wonderful is innovative and transformative. The challenge always is to see the love and truth among all the apparent noise and chaos of the world around us. The real, authentic you is already perfect waiting for you to listen, connect, and act. Be Something Wonderful® is you.

## Josh Levey

Owner  
Medici MediaSpace

Josh Levey is the Owner of Medici MediaSpace located in St. Louis, Missouri, and is responsible for the strategic direction, vision, growth, and performance of Medici’s brand. Medici is a group of small to medium-sized businesses, nonprofits, as well as entrepreneurs, freelancers, artists, and individuals who share energy and expertise. Josh’s focus on small business owners has helped to showcase his passion for helping others by creating a co-working space that is pivotal to their success.

**“Entrepreneurship is something that my father always inspired in me.”**

In order to make a difference, Josh created an atmosphere of collaboration and learning. The strategy sessions



## NEWSMAKERS



## Alex Bayer

CEO  
Genius Juice LLC

that he offers are an opportunity for like-minded entrepreneurs to learn the necessary steps to ensure that they have a business that is continually growing and thriving.

Medici is built on expertise, trust, caring and sharing. With Josh’s mantra to ‘provide unparalleled customer service’, Medici continues to grow and thrive.

Alex Bayer was a fresh college graduate when he joined Corporate Insurance sales. However, he always had a penchant for fresh, organic smoothies, unaware that it would be a big part of his future.

He loved that smoothies were filling, energizing, and extremely simple (with just five or less ingredients, including coconut or almond milk, protein powder, banana, and blueberry, for example).

**Alex’s mission for Genius juice was and continues to be “Bringing Nutrition to the Mainstream”**

One day at a friend’s house, they blended an organic coconut smoothie made using an entire coconut, including coconut water and coconut meat. After tasting it, opportunity struck, and Alex exclaimed, “This is Genius!” He soon translated his love for smoothies into his company Genius Juice.

Alex’s mission for Genius juice was and continues to be ‘Bringing Nutrition to the Mainstream’ with great nutrient-dense products and simple ingredients. What makes Genius Juice so ‘Genius’ is that the only base ingredients are the whole coconut blended, making it simple, creamy, delicious and nutritious.

## Ranveer Allahbadia

Social Media Entrepreneur &  
Motivational Speaker

Ranveer Allahbadia is a Social Media Entrepreneur, YouTuber, Motivational Speaker, Leadership Coach, and soon to be Author. His journey began in 2015, right after he graduated from engineering college. The YouTube channel BeerBiceps was initially supposed to be a tool to market his fitness startup. He soon realized that there is an even bigger game to be played in the domains of social media and digital marketing.

He is now the Founder of BeerBiceps Pvt Ltd that creates self-improvement content in various formats (7 Million+ online followers/subscribers). He is also the Co-Founder of Monk Entertainment, a 50 member organization that provides content marketing and digital marketing solutions.



In 2018, BeerBiceps diversified into creating regional content online. Today, his Hindi YouTube Channel, ‘Ranveer Allahbadia,’ stands at 2 million subscribers while his English YouTube channel stands at 3 million subscribers.

In July 2019, the BeerBiceps team launched the podcast, The Ranveer Show(TRS). TRS featured legends like Arnold Schwarzenegger, Priyanka Chopra, Sadhguru, Glenn McGrath and Niithin Kamath, amongst other renowned names. In March 2020, #TheRanveerShow became India’s top-ranked podcast on Spotify.

## Lisa Riggs

Founder & CEO of Spirit  
Sox USA

As a mom of two college-aged children, Lisa has been involved in fundraisers for various activities and sports. After a successful sock fundraiser for her daughter’s school, Lisa saw how popular and easy custom socks could be for any organization, and Spirit Sox USA was born.

Since then, Lisa has created custom socks for hundreds of businesses that use them in oodles of creative ways: customer gifts, client incentives, event giveaways, fundraisers and many more. She said, “I absolutely LOVE working with my customers to design and deliver socks that meet their unique needs. It’s my goal that your socks speak to your target market and make a positive impact.”

Spirit Sox USA is certified as a Women’s Business Enterprise (WBE) through the



Women’s Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC), the nation’s largest third-party certifier of businesses owned and operated by women in the United States.

One of her customer testimonials said, “Lisa was amazing to work with. She designed our specialized school socks and matched our colors. She and her design team went over and above our expectations.”

## Liz Willits

Founder at Lizwillits.com



years working as a marketer for SaaS tech companies, she quit and started her own business.

At lizwillits.com, she helps SaaS startups grow with digital marketing. Her services include Email Marketing, Content Marketing, Copywriting, Lead Generations and Consultations. She also offers a free guide on ‘How to Get Benchmark-Busting Email Open Rates’ that teaches proven strategies to write better subject lines that make email marketing more effective.

**Liz’s clients include up-and-coming Y Combinator startups as well as some of the fastest-growing companies in the world — like Hopin.**

Here’s what Hopin has to say about her: “Liz has been an invaluable asset to the Hopin marketing team. She’s easy to work with, fast, and one of the best content writers we know — from email marketing to ad copy to content.”

# Lessons From The Corporate Rebel - Semco

- Sherlyn Gomes

The Semco Style of working started when 21-year-old Ricardo Semler took over the Semco Group after his father handed over the reins of the dwindling company to him. On his first day, he fired 60 percent of all top managers and started his journey to democratize the company. When Semler noticed that his employees were not happy, he decided to do something about it. He introduced a radical new concept: The Semco Way.

## The Philosophy: Give Employees Complete Freedom, As Long As Their Work Is Completed In Time.

Over the next two decades, with a maverick strategy and outstanding work ethic, Semler grew the company from just 90 to 5000 employees. Impressively, he also raised the company's revenue from \$4 million to \$212 million, with the company growing at an average rate of 47 percent. With this new way of managing employees, Semco also achieved a phenomenally low employee turnover rate of just 2 percent under Semler's outstanding leadership.

Semco leaves remarkable lessons for companies worldwide to follow:

## Nurture And Cultivate A Trusting Environment

At Semco, they function with two ruling assumptions:

1. 'Trust in adult behavior'— Do not try to micro-manage the actions of every employee. Trust the primary human drive to build toward the future, be productive and to contribute to something larger than themselves, and
2. Every person's rhythm is different when it comes to working; when, where and how they do their best work. That goes for the young, ambitious employee working twelve plus hours a day but also taking time off for regular lunches with his girlfriend, or the Shop Floor Manager who takes the day off

before a new project launch to spend time in reflection at home. "We want people to work on a structure of their own," said Semler.

There is no right way to find the right balance. Semler defined human equilibrium as the right mix of challenging, meaningful work and truly rejuvenating pursuits. It is the best ground for producing life's true highs—the exhilaration, Semler said, is the whole point of the exercise.

## The Three Whys

Semco's primary strategy relies on asking the question, 'Why?' Semler called it the 'Three Whys.' When faced with a dilemma, "We simply ask 'Why?' three times in a row. 'Why do you do things the way you do? Why is it important for people to come in at the same time? Why is it important for meetings to happen in a certain way?' You keep asking why and you generally get to the answer, 'it is what it is.' And when people realize they're stuck in a mode they really can't explain, this works wonders in breaking down resistance and opening up new possibilities."

Semler admitted, "it's not very comfortable for anyone." But he says that's the point. When people are actively encouraged to question, get up and leave a meeting that bores them to their core, bop into a discussion that interests them, and push back on previous conclusions, it builds a culture that encourages curiosity and empowers employees.

## Cede Control And Make Room For Innovation

All of Semco's experiences are focused on "returning control to our people over a very important piece of real estate—their destiny," said Semler. The Semco group is ruthless when it comes to clearing the junk in people's to-do lists, "waste and distraction in all the logistics, the getting around, the sitting in meetings, and the overhead that defines 'normal' work."



Semler's experiment in cutting out the clutter include:

1. Up'n Down Pay - This is an adaptable system of flexible pay wherein employees elect to increase or decrease their work hours and consequent pay. Parents with young children, for example, may want to cut back on hours for a certain period. The pay structure is completely transparent allowing coworkers to know how much salary each employee in the organization earns.
2. Retire-a-Little- Ricardo Semler also introduced a program for employees to buy back one day a week, so they can spend time on activities that are important to them. Like learning to play the violin or climbing a mountain. The idea behind the Retire-a-Little program is that there are three important things in people's lives: health, money and time. In the beginning of your career, you're healthy, you have some money, but no time. When you retire you have time, some money, but not always the health to do what you want to do.

With the program, employees are able to buy back one day a week for 10% of their salary. After retirement, Semco can do the opposite and hire them back for one day a week. After retirement, a lot of people still want to work and Semco can still appeal to the experience and knowledge of ex-employees.

## In Conclusion:

Semler said, "We're in favor of a hierarchy of self-interest and talent and opposed to the symbols of power and control that come with it."

# Creating A Robust And Hybrid Workforce

- Siya Mehta



a flexible system is implemented.

## Creating A Successful Hybrid Culture

While implementing a hybrid workforce seems like 'the answer', implementing it meticulously is vital. The following are some tips on how to incorporate a flexible work culture.

1. Arrange various options for different employees: Standardizing employee needs is fatal. While some employees thrive during remote work, others have devastatingly succumbed to remote work pressure. It is critical to offer various work options to employees. Instead of shifting some to completely remote and others to on-site, employees should be allowed to move between combinations of both to maximise motivation levels.

For example, Ford Motor allows employees to continue working from home indefinitely voluntarily and only requires attendance for limited projects.

2. Maintain no discrimination between employees: It is common for businesses to find remote employees inferior. This is a dangerous mistake that can lead to an organizational breakdown and a drop in trust and loyalty. Opportunities and appreciation should only be based on credit and merit and not on the location of work at all. Since companies can face a lawsuit, it is recommended to implement policies that advocate equality between employees.
3. Employee communication should be actively supported: Employee bonds and social relationships are important aspects that build employee motivation. If employee connections are weakened due to remote work, it is the employer's responsibility to connect employees. This helps facilitate collaboration, innovation and communication. A BCG survey demonstrated that employees who maintain social connections with their colleagues report a rate of 2.5

times more productivity than before the COVID-19 pandemic and remote work. For example, companies are hosting movie nights, happy hours and virtual cooking classes to enable team building and mutual motivation.

4. Keep appropriate infrastructure ready: Technological infrastructure that allows conferencing, scheduling and seamless communication are extremely important. Moreover, technologies that can help easily share data and collaborate are crucial too. The infrastructure can make sure that efficiency and quality of work are maintained without a communication breakdown.

For example, Zoom has developed software and hardware devices to support remote employees.

## What Is An Example Of A Flexible Hybrid Model?

Google and Alphabet Inc CEO, Sundar Pichai, announced that Google will move to a hybrid work week. This initiative allows 20% of the staff to work from home permanently. The next 20% of the staff will be moving to new offices and the remaining 60% will be working from their current office locations. Additionally, most Google employees will spend around three days in the office and two days 'wherever they work best.' Sundar Pichai also went on to say, "The future of work is flexibility."

## In Conclusion:

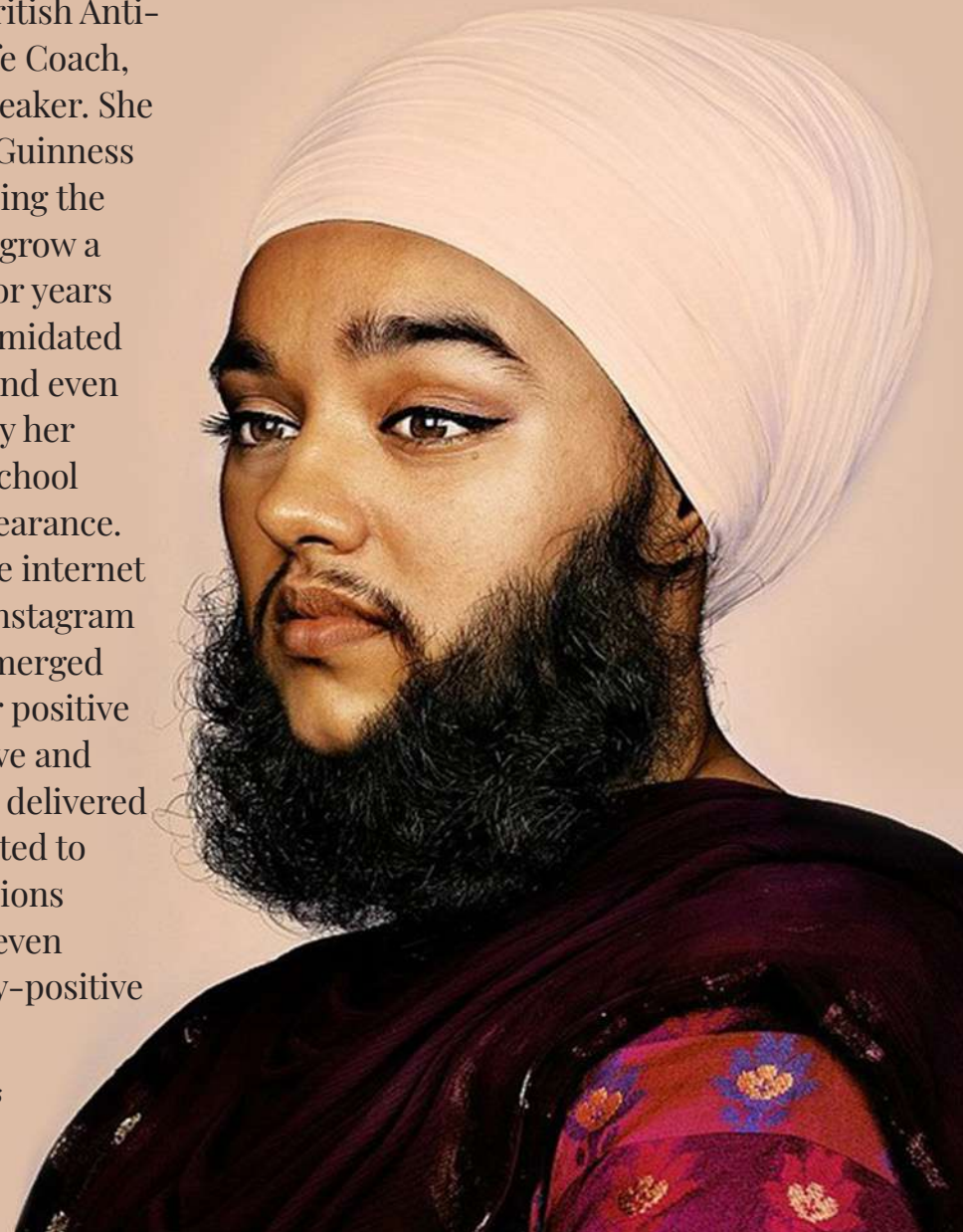
The hybrid work model can boost a business's standing from all aspects and is evidently the gateway to the future. However, to successfully implement a hybrid work model, it is vital to treat all employees equally. It is also important to make sure that employees are evenly productive in a hybrid model. With these factors in mind, a business is prepared to lead the future labour force effectively.

# Breaking Stereotypes And Spreading Self-Love

Harnam Kaur is a British Anti-Bullying Activist, Life Coach, and Motivational Speaker. She currently holds the Guinness World Record for being the youngest woman to grow a full-length beard. For years she was bullied, intimidated with death threats and even stabbed with pens by her classmates during school for her unusual appearance. Now she has won the internet with over 100,000 Instagram followers and has emerged as the poster girl for positive body image, self-love and acceptance. She has delivered a Ted Talk, contributed to government discussions on body image and even fronted several body-positive campaigns.

Written by Sherlyn Gomes

Image Credit: Wikipedia



Born on 29 November 1990, Harnaam first noticed that she was growing facial hair at the tender age of eleven.

At just 11, Kaur had to deal with the painful irregularity of her menstrual cycle, which saw her confined to hospital wards; she experienced unusual hair growth on her chin, cheeks, jawline and neck. Kaur recalled, “My body formed itself in shapes which led me to become confused in what it wanted to be. I was a lot larger than everyone in my class; actually, I was the ‘fattest person in year 6’, I remember hearing another child say. Children can be so mean, can’t they? Especially when they have the freedom of being without their parents. With my irregular bodily functions, the pain and the discomfort, I constantly found myself in the doctor’s surgery.” The diagnosis revealed that she had Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS); a common side effect is Hirsutism that causes the body to grow excessive facial and body hair.

While most adolescent girls going through puberty experience many changes in their body, Kaur’s was much more severe as she began developing a full beard. She spent her teenage years frantically trying to remove excess facial and body hair by waxing twice a week, shaving incessantly and wearing baggy clothes.

Kaur tells The Guardian, “The wax was applied, the paper was put and then they pulled. I screamed so loud that the woman getting her hair done in the next room threw her magazine across the room. I was crying my eyes out. I did that every other day because my hair grew back so fast – and also shaved in between. They waxed it until my skin burned, going over the same patch again because of dense growth. Then they would thread my skin raw, then pluck it.”

During her teenage years, she faced horrendous bullying that eventually led to Kaur’s depressive phase. At one point, she even considered ending her life until one day; she had an epiphany. She shared, “At the age of 16 I hit my biggest low. They called me a ‘man’, ‘a beast’, an ‘ogre’, or just ‘fat’. I had been suicidal all year due to immense bullying from school and people in society. As I sat there, I started to counsel myself. I told myself: ‘The energy you are putting into ending

your life, put all that energy into turning your life around and doing something better’.”

Kaur then took a big step and started growing her beard at 16. This personal experience greatly impacted her and pushed her to share her story with the public.

“I realised that people are struggling. Body shaming, bullying, lack of self love, low self esteem, and lack of self worth is universal; we all feel it at some point in our lives,” she said. “I had to be another person with a testimony to stand up and actually speak out loud, we need more people to do this, it is important for people who are dealing with depression, anxiety or suicidal thoughts to know that they are not alone. This is why I find it important to just carry on talking authentically.” She has now built a community online who are not only supportive of her but, more importantly, to each other.

In 2014, Kaur became the first woman with a beard to walk the ramp in London Fashion Week. Now, she endorses several brands and products. As a model, Kaur has one rule – the collaboration must break down barriers and stereotypes. She said, “I want to shock people with my look in a positive way. Look at me and be confused, I am here to change everything that you know or believe about what it means to be or ‘look’ like a woman.”

In 2015, Kaur won the Guinness World Record for being the youngest woman to grow a full-length beard. Speaking about the accomplishment, she said, “I was absolutely thrilled to now be celebrated and world renowned for something that I was previously bullied and body shamed for. My record is evident that you can achieve anything and everything once you are authentic and living life truthfully for yourself.”

She continued, “I never really understood what role I had to play in this world as a bearded lady. As the years have gone on I have realised that I was born to stand up proud as a woman who promotes body confidence within both genders, I was born to show the world something else apart from the ‘society’s norm,’ and I was born to help people become confident and comfortable within themselves.”

In 2015, Kaur won the Guinness World Record for being the youngest woman to grow a full-length beard. Speaking about the accomplishment, she said, “I was absolutely thrilled to now be celebrated and world renowned for something that I was previously bullied and body shamed for. My record is evident that you can achieve anything and everything once you are authentic and living life truthfully for yourself.”

Kaur is now far from hiding her true identity. Her social media feed flaunts her pictures of her various trips and the new friends she’s made on the way. Her wedding photoshoot shattered the internet as she gorgeously flaunted her floral beard.

In conclusion, she said, “I now use my experience, my hardships and what I have overcome to help people overcome their own. I travel nationally and internationally spreading the wider message of self-love and compassion. My work is universal and will go on even after I’m gone. With or without my Lady Beard, my work is still powerful because the message is of love and acceptance.”

# Ageism In The Workplace

- Brianna Da Cruz



**A**geism refers to the act of prejudicing, discriminating and stereotyping against people based on age. While it is often prominent with older adults, younger people can be affected as well. However, ageism in the workplace often targets employees generally between 45 to 74 years old.

## Root Of Ageism

Ageism is one of the least-discussed biases in the world, partly because ageism is concealed cautiously. Ageism often transpires unconsciously as well. Managers commonly think of younger employees as better 'investments.' Adding to this common misconception, it is believed that older employees 'decay' over time. Older employees are thought to have lower productivity levels and an inability to adapt and learn. It is further thought that they are more fatigued. These stereotypes are embedded into the culture of an excessive number of companies.

## Recognising Ageism In The Workplace

Two out of three employees who are aged 45 or over have either observed or experienced ageism in the workplace as per The American Association of Retired Persons. Since age discrimination can be unconscious, spotting it at the workplace can be challenging. However, the following are some signs and tips that can be strong indicators:

1. Companies that have the tendency to leave older employees out of meetings and activities.
2. Older employees not being considered for training or promotion opportunities
3. Mundane and boring tasks are given to older employees since they are 'better suited' to perform them.
4. Trend of older employees being fired to be replaced by younger employees

## COVID-19 And Ageism

Using the pandemic and elder susceptibility to the virus as an excuse, managers have been firing older employees and replacing them instantly. As per The New School's Schwartz Centre for Economic Policy Analysis, the unemployment rate for employees aged 55 and over was substantially higher than the unemployment rate for mid-career employees during the pandemic. This gap has persisted for six months or longer for the first time in 50 years.

## Harmful Effects Of Supporting Ageism

Businesses and economies often lose out on valuable and experienced employees due to ageism. The American Association of Retired Persons reported that an estimated US\$850 billion in GDP, 8.6 million jobs and US\$545 billion in lost salaries in 2018 alone due to ageism. Younger employees may have contemporary knowledge but often have a lack of invaluable first-hand

knowledge. Losing out on this experience can lead to a massive decrease in opportunities to grow.

Older employees also tend to be more mature, prepared, confident and specialised. Efficiency is accompanied by older employees and businesses can uphold their brand image without hesitancy and doubts.

Older employees tend to inspire younger generations. Their disciplined lifestyle and contribution tend to encourage employees to strive for more. Moreover, they can offer priceless advice and reassurance to younger employees who are unsure about their abilities. Further, this form of mentoring can help managers since they receive more meticulous and quality pitches. Managers also spend less time micromanaging and motivating younger employees, further driving up efficiency and reducing wastage.

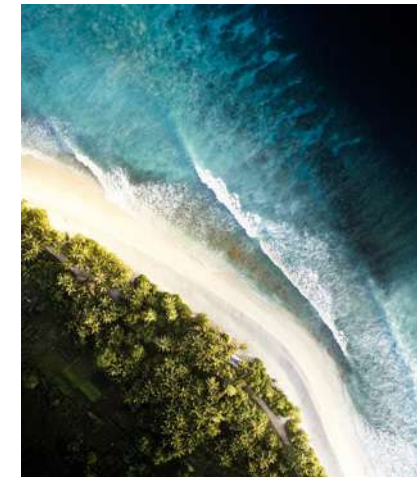
Distrust within a company makes all employees look for alternatives. This distrust stems from businesses practising illegal and unethical thoughts. This distrust turns down potential employees due to increased job insecurity. If employees still choose to work, the business will likely observe low morale and loyalty. Moreover, a trend of firing older employees can attract unwanted reputation and pressure groups as well.

## In Conclusion:

Managers and employees need to remember that ageism is illegal and that companies can always suffer if they are caught and reported practising age discrimination. The U.S. Federal Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) protects individuals over the age of 40 in a range of employment actions including hiring, firing, pay, promotions, job assignments, layoffs, training and benefits. Not only is ageism illegal, but it can prove to be fatal and devastating to a business.

# Business & Ocean: An Unexpected Partnership

- Justin Roberts



**B**usinesses have begun striving and exponentially growing in distinctive and rare industry oceans. Entrepreneurs have mixed sustainability with profits to create a new avenue of business opportunities. Environmental sustainability is on the rise and profits are finally accompanying it too.

## Combining Profitability And Ocean Sustainability

Entrepreneurs have explored creative and unconventional solutions to create products that protect the environment while helping them earn profits. These profits become relatively easy to earn when an effective solution is developed since customers are willing to pay higher prices to protect our world.

Businesses are using advanced technology to bring back biodiversity, water quality and restore marine life. This act allows them to be environmentally conscious while protecting the future of their business model as well.

For example, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations has stated that nearly 9.1 million tons (over 10 per cent of all the fish caught every year) are thrown away. Half of this number stems from the use of trawling nets. Dan Watson of SafetyNet Technologies profitably developed a

solution to this problem in the form of advanced fishing nets with LED lights that allow efficient large-scale fishing. These LED lights substantially reduce the number of unwanted species that end up getting caught in nets. The business also allows crews to save on fuel and regulatory fines.



"In an era of overfishing and shifting habitats because of climate change that defy international regulations, reducing the amount of fish or other marine animals that are caught by mistake could have important consequences for the health of various populations as well as ocean biodiversity on the whole," Mr Watson said. The vast environmental, economic and ecological impact of their innovation allows them to profitably grow their business. SafetyNet Technology's products allow fishermen to experience up to 25% revenue increase and a 20% decrease in fuel usage, which extends to a decrease in fuel costs as well. These profound benefits allow SafetyNet Technology to promote their products effectively with strong revenue and demand, making it easy to be profitable as well. They further customise their products to match the needs of their customers, incentivising customers to pay more as well.

In the same vein, Mr. Marty Odlin is another entrepreneur who decided to create Running Tide after witnessing marine life decline rapidly. Odlin employed a combination of robotics, sensors and machine learning (ML) to

create an aquaculture operation. While this system helps him sell boats, oysters and clams, he also grows Kelp (seaweed) which can pull carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and permanently isolate it. This carbon dioxide is then buried in the ocean floor and carbon offsets can be made available for consequent sales. The carbon offset market is an extremely sustainable market that allows carbon footprints to reduce substantially.

Large businesses have also been shifting their operations to work towards ocean sustainability while maintaining profit levels.

For example, the Dutch designer company, G-Star RAW, partnered with Parley, to make a denim collection from ocean plastic. According to the World Economic Forum, at least 8 billion kilograms of plastic are dumped in our oceans every year and this horrifying statistic is equivalent to discarding a truckful of plastic into the ocean every minute. To protect our oceans from this disturbing reality, Parley gathers bionic from plastic in the ocean and transforms it into yarn by using a unique manufacturing process. The denims look and feel exactly like regular denim but help save our marine life and oceans as well.

Pharrell William's company Bionic Yarn which transforms plastic into fabric has also joined this partnership and has led to various merchandise collections of Pharrell Williams being profitable as well.

## In Conclusion:

With the increased awareness of environmental damage across the world, brand-conscious individuals are moving to trustworthy sustainable brands and are willing to pay a premium for sustainable products. The willingness to pay high prices shows solidarity and allows business to maintain profit margins while making the world a more sustainable place.

# From Humble Beginnings To Self Made Billionaire

Jan Koum is a Ukrainian-born Internet Entrepreneur who co-founded the mobile messaging application WhatsApp with Brian Acton. Facebook Inc. acquired the top-rated mobile application in 2014 for a whopping US\$19 billion. A billionaire today, he is listed amongst the wealthiest Americans, who was once so impoverished that he had to live off food stamps just a few years ago. But with his resilience and grit, he has made his mark on the world.

*Written by Kyle Goldberg*



Jan Koum was raised in a small village in Kiev, Ukraine. Born to a mother who was a homemaker and a father who worked as a construction manager for schools and hospitals, he was the only child. His family was poverty-stricken, and his house had no hot water. His parents rarely talked on the phone, fearing that the state might tap it.

When he was 16, Koum and his mother relocated to Mountain View in California due to the troubling anti-Semitic and political environment. With the help of government aid, she was able to procure a tiny two-bedroom apartment. His father unfortunately never made it over and passed away in 1997.

To make ends meet, his mother took up babysitting, and Koum swept the grocery store floor. Unfortunately, his mother was soon diagnosed with cancer, and they lived off her disability allowance sponsored by the state. By 18, Koum had taught himself computer networking by purchasing manuals from a used book store and learnt that he had an inherent knack for it. He joined a hacker group, w00w00, on the Efnet internet relay chat network that helped him learn further.

Jan Koum worked his way through high school to support his family. He found a job at Yahoo as an infrastructure engineer. One day, Yahoo co-founder David Filo called him for help. "I'm in class," Koum answered discreetly. "What the fuck are you doing in class?" Filo said. "Get your ass into the office." Filo had a small team of engineers and needed all hands on deck. "I hated school anyway," Koum said. He dropped out soon afterwards. At Yahoo, he formed a rapport with Brian Acton, another Yahoo employee with whom he would develop a long-term collaboration in the future.

When Koum's mother succumbed to her disease in 2000, the young Ukrainian was all alone. He credits Acton with reaching out and offering support. "He would invite me to his house," Koum remembered fondly.

His distaste for advertising was also evident back then; he got pulled in to help launch Yahoo's robust advertising platform, Project Panama, in 2006. "Dealing with ads is depressing," he

said. "You don't make anyone's life better by making advertisements work better." In Jan Koum's LinkedIn profile, he unenthusiastically describes his last three years at Yahoo with the words, "Did some work."

After nine long years at Yahoo, he decided he had enough; both Koum and Acton left the job to explore newer avenues.

In January 2009, Koum bought an iPhone and realized that the newly established App Store was about to create a whole new industry catering to apps. He visited the home of a Russian friend, Alex Fishman. "Jan was showing me his address book," recalled Fishman. "His thinking was it would be really cool to have statuses next to individual names of the people." The statuses would show if your battery were low, you were on a call, or you were at the gym.

Early WhatsApp, however, kept getting stuck or crashing. Koum worked over these problems relentlessly, day in and day out, until he fixed all the bug issues.

Koum had another brilliant idea and visited his friend Acton. They both sat at Acton's kitchen table and started messaging each other via WhatsApp, with the famed double check blue tick that showed another person had received and read the message. Acton realized the potential of a richer SMS experience – and more effective than the MMS messages used at the time for sending photos and other media that often didn't work and took forever to load. "You had the whole open-ended bounty of the Internet to work with," he said.

In October 2010, Acton got five friends to invest \$250,000 in seed funding into the app; thus, he was granted cofounder status and a stake. He officially joined on November 1.

Five years after its launch, WhatsApp was among the world's most prominent and profitable phone apps. The pair were previously adamant that they would not sell and would continue to build the business by themselves. "I worry about what [an acquiring] company would do with our population," Acton said. "You're never hands-off in the long term. To have someone come along and buy us seems awfully unethical. It goes against

Five years after its launch, WhatsApp was among the world's most prominent and profitable phone apps

my personal integrity." Koum added: "We worked in a large company and we weren't that happy. Facebook, Google, Apple, Yahoo! – there's a common theme. None of these companies ever sold. By staying independent they were able to build a great company." They had never considered an IPO seriously. "It's not an active part of our agenda," according to Acton. "We just want to go back to work, for God's sake. We have bugs! We just have so much going on that we're not planning our exit."

However, Mark Zuckerberg approached Koum in 2012; they met over coffee in Los Altos. Zuckerberg made a formal offer, and the deal was announced on February 19, 2014. \$19bn in cash and stock (and a Facebook board seat) alleviated the founders' doubts. In a blog post that year, Koum insisted that WhatsApp "will remain autonomous and operate independently", with "absolutely no ads interrupting your communication".

Koum said in an interview, "I grew up in a society where everything you did was eavesdropped on, recorded, snatched on, I had friends getting into trouble for telling anecdotes about communist leaders. I remember hearing stories from my parents of dissidents like Andrei Sakharov, sentenced to exile because of his political views. Nobody should have the right to eavesdrop, or you become a totalitarian state – the kind of state I escaped as a kid to come to this country where you have democracy and freedom of speech. Our goal is to protect it. We have encryption between our client and our server. We don't save any messages on our servers, we don't store your chat history."

In conclusion, he said, "Our focus remains on delivering the promise of WhatsApp far and wide so that people around the world have the freedom to speak their mind without fear."

# Transforming The Lives Of The Jerash Community

Noora is a Humanitarian and Social Entrepreneur of Palestinian origin. She runs social impact companies in Jordan and Palestine. Her company, Sitti Soap focuses on employing refugees, particularly women, in camps in Jordan and Palestine. Inspired by her multicultural upbringing, Noora has used her companies to explore issues of identity.

*Written by Alexis Miller*

Noora was born in Dubai and moved to Canada as a young girl with her family. She completed her High School Education and a Masters in Political Science in Canada itself. As a kid, she said, "I remember constantly trying to figure out where she would fit into a place where there wasn't a single other Arab or Muslim person around. As a kid, it was difficult being the odd one out."

Noora was confused about where she belonged in the world due to her multicultural upbringing. During her

Masters, when the opportunity arose, she chose the research topic, 'Identity Issues with Palestinians', for which she conducted her primary research in Jordan's refugee camps. She travelled to areas of the Middle East that she felt deeply connected to her whole life. One day towards the end of her stay in Jordan, she was taken to an interview by a local social worker to meet two girls who had just lost their father. They had dropped out of school and were bitter and angry. She was politely trying to ask them some questions to understand their situation better. But this was the first time that her questions were greeted with such aggression. She recalled, "They called me selfish and criticised me for coming to collect my questions and then leaving for a better life while they had to stay where they were. I became depressed for a while after that; the encounter triggered some serious soul searching and led me to question everything I thought was right and reasonable. But it was a wake-up call. I realised there had to be more."

After that encounter, she worked for the United Nations and founded an NGO, 'Hopes for Women in Education, that provided specific scholarships to refugee women. She later worked for the same NGO, providing refugee women with internship opportunities. This was when she met Jacqueline Sofia, the co-founder of SITTI Soap.

Noora and Jacqueline witnessed the torment of the refugees, especially the Jerash Camp located in Jordan. The Camp was initially set up as an 'emergency camp' in 1968 for almost

11,500 Palestine refugees and displaced families that left the Gaza Strip as a result of the Arab- Israeli war in 1967. According to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, Jerash camp is the poorest among the ten Palestine refugee camps in Jordan, with 52.7 percent of Palestine refugees having an income below the national poverty line. Jerash camp also has the highest number of Palestine refugees who don't have health insurance, with 88 per cent of refugees not covered by any health insurance at all.

Noora wanted to find a solution to their woes and was soon approached by a group of women residing in the Jerash refugee camp who were trained in the art of making handmade olive oil soaps. These women wanted Jacqueline and

**"The name SITTI means 'my grandma' in Arabic and is inspired by the traditions followed by our grandparents. They wanted to bring out the natural and traditional elements like the tale of every elder and their emphasis on natural products and homemade remedies."**



*Image Credit: Sittisoap*

Noora to help them market and sell the handmade soaps. Wanting to lend a helping hand, Noora and Jacqueline soon started their own skincare company called SITTI Soaps.

The name SITTI means 'my grandma' in Arabic and is inspired by the traditions followed by our grandparents. They wanted to bring out the natural and traditional elements like the tale of every elder and their emphasis on natural products and homemade remedies.

Talking about SITTI, Noora explained, "It wasn't just about the soap that was being made, it was more about these resilient women that really wanted to make more out of their lives."

She continued, "We knew this brand was clean and had the potential to be completely up-to-par with commercial market standards, so of course we needed to differentiate Sitti from your average NGO that markets products

because people feel sorry for their beneficiaries. We wanted to break the stigma that says because a product came from a camp, it isn't very good. So we decided to launch a crowdfunding campaign, to promote this kind of messaging and to build brand recognition based on both product story and quality."

The campaign helped with brand perception and visibility and also helped in raising capital to give the women a monthly salary as they built and tested the product as they advanced. With the support of generous individual donors and businesses across Jordan - they were able to pay for an old shack of a home in the Camp and renovate it into a full-fledged centre. A centre that gave Sitti soap women a proper working environment, professional equipment, and a space for more training.

SITTI has touched the lives and empowered many refugee women who

were earlier shackled by debts and the refugee camps. Ikram's story is a beautiful example. Ikram's husband was suffering from a chronic illness and was unable to work, and hence they accumulated a massive debt of medical bills. Ikram and her family of 13 were in no condition of repaying the amount. Ikram soon joined SITTI Soap and paid off all her loans one at a time. Now Ikram and her family are not only debt-free but can afford a good life.

Another example is the story of Nisreen, a mother of seven children, preparing for the eighth at the time. She is the sole breadwinner of the family as her husband has a disability. Working with SITTI has given her a renewed financial liberation.

In conclusion, Noora said, "It took a long time to embrace and be proud of... This is who I am, this is the beauty of my culture, this is the beauty of my identity - take it or leave it."

# Do Less While Achieving More

- Kyle Goldberg

There is an implicit assumption that firms function on today, stating that multitasking is a good thing, and the people who can multitask are superior and capable of achieving more. However, cognitive research has proven that concentration is vital for success in any field of skilled performance, implying that multitasking isn't the golden pill it is perceived to be when it comes to productivity. It states that the best way to produce top quality work is to have sufficient undistracted time to focus and concentrate on the task, whether it's writing an article, preparing for a presentation, drafting a proposal, or even writing an important email.

To focus completely on a particular task requires mindful thinking and a brain that is not overloaded and overworked. Here are three simple steps you can incorporate into your day to achieve more while doing less.

## 1. Use The Pomodoro Technique

Would it be advisable to go to the gym and work out till every muscle in your body aches, with your body refusing even to stand? Well, that's precisely what most people tend to do while working. Going berserk on tasks and seeing through every detail, even when you are on the brink of burnout, will only ensure that all the work you've done will fall like pieces of dominos. So how can you develop a sustainable habit that will help you excel at work and improve health?

The Pomodoro technique is a valuable tool; it uses a simple approach:

- set a timer to 25 minutes,
- focus on one specific work task until the timer rings, and
- then take a 5-minute break

This small break allows your mind to refresh and gets back to work with a new wave of enthusiasm. You will be able to properly harness your brain energy consistently throughout the day to maintain high productivity and accomplish your daily tasks quicker and more efficiently while doing less work!



## 2. Take Time Off To Think

Most of the greatest leaders have known to block time out of their schedule to better their strategies and improve their processes. CEO Jeff Weiner and Warren Buffett swear by this technique.

These moments of silence can be spent in meditation or just utter silence to organize your thoughts and find solutions to pressing issues that appear once the mind is silenced. A recent study conducted by Harvard Medical School stated that regular meditation and yoga surpassed the benefits of a vacation in parameters such as stress, depression as well as overall health benefits. As both, the groups were examined 10 months later the results indicated that regular meditators still showed significant improvements on these scores, the novice meditators even more so. However, the vacationers were back to baseline.

## 3. Eliminate Unnecessary Tasks

Write down six important tasks at the end of each day and start the next day working on the list. This is the famous Ivy Lee

Method that has helped Bethlehem Steel double its productivity in just three months. The company was headed by Charles M. Schwab, who was considered one of the richest men alive in the 1900s. Thomas Edison once referred to Schwab as the 'master hustler.'

Once you prioritize the critical tasks and focus solely on them and eliminate the clutter, it will get easier to get the task done in the least amount of time as there won't be the temptation of multi-tasking looming over your head.

## In Conclusion:

The breaks that you avoid taking, in the end, are the ones that leave you falling short on your targets. These three steps won't only help improve productivity but restore the norms of your work-life balance, leaving you with gratitude for fulfilment. As Tim Ferriss, American Podcaster, said, "Focus on being productive instead of busy." And you are guaranteed to see the results.

# Driving Diversity And Inclusion In The Workplace

- Sherlyn Gomes



Diversity and inclusion drive innovative results. According to a report by McKinsey, companies that possess good racial/ethnic and gender diversity are 35 percent and 15 percent more likely to have financial returns above their national industry medians. In another study of 22,000 companies across 91 countries, companies with 30 percent female executives make six per cent more in profit. While intent must remain the topmost reason for companies to become more diverse and inclusive, these data points surely make a compelling case for companies to take immediate action.

## Accenture Paving The Way

Julie Sweet, CEO of Accenture, said, "Our unwavering commitment to inclusion and diversity unleashes innovation and creates a culture where everyone feels they have equal opportunity."

Accenture has taken several initiatives that can act as a guidebook to transforming organizations into more diverse and inclusive workplaces. Some of these initiatives are listed below:

### 1. Diverse Employee Networks

They try to create, employ and empower employees globally to help them grow and excel in their field. The organization showed their support for the #BlackLivesMatter Campaign in 2020 and released a six-film series of their employees sharing their stories about what being Black means to them.

It was created by members of Accenture's Caribbean and African Network in Ireland and the UK. They partnered with filmmakers and animators, with each short film conveying the uniqueness of individual experiences while illuminating moments

that unite us all.

The first video, Black Boy Fly is a story of Daniel, a Technology Consulting Analyst, who realised the debilitating effects that mainstream presentations of black men had on him followed by a rallying cry to rise above them. In the video, he starts off by saying, "Black boy, how many nights did you let them play target practice with your dreams? Lettings headlines and news stories put ceilings on what you could achieve? How much time did you spend biting your nails to look less threatening?" depicting the dilemma that coloured kids have to face every day.

Watch the Black Is Series [here](#).

### 2. Unconscious Bias Training

They have mandatory training for all employees to help identify and eliminate unconscious bias and promote an inclusive workplace culture.

At an organizational level, they focus on two things. One, create opportunities for teams to engage with people from diverse backgrounds. Pose challenges to confront the tendency to bond only with those who are 'like us.'

Two, within office walls, exercises are planned that help employees reflect on their personal experiences and uncover how their hidden biases were formed. Employees are introduced to some great narratives in this area via books, Ted Talks, and Podcasts. Self-awareness is the first step to control misinformed reactions. By doing this, the company has seen great results leading to greater inclusivity.

### 3. Workforce Demographics

They publish their diverse demographics to the world to establish goals for hiring, retention and advancement. Transparency is paramount; they believe it holds them accountable. In 2016, Accenture became the first professional services company to publish comprehensive data about their US workforce. Every year since, they have shared their workforce composition by gender, ethnicity and race, persons with disabilities and veterans.

Since the company began reporting (the

image of the demographics are shown above), they have made great strides, including:

- They have added more than 25,000 people of diverse backgrounds.
- The company has recruited more than 5,100 military veterans, service members and spouses, exceeding their goal of hiring 5,000 by the end of 2020.
- They have grown the number of women from 35.8% to 40.0%, achieving their 2020 goal.
- They give people an opportunity to voluntarily self-identify as LGBTQ, gender non-binary, people with disabilities and being a part of veteran populations so they can more accurately reflect and effectively support these communities.
  - The number of people who self-identify as persons with disabilities grew by 1.6 percentage points and now represent 4.5% of their workforce.
  - Since 2019, people identifying as LGBTQ increased by 0.5 percentage points and those as gender non-binary from 35 people to 44 in 2020.

These statistics have been celebrated and awarded globally and included in lists such as DiversityInc's Top 50 Companies for Diversity, Disability Equality Index, BLACK ENTERPRISE's Best Companies for Diversity amongst others. They prove that the company is on the right track to drive diversity and inclusion in workplaces and can serve as a great example for other companies to follow suit.

## In Conclusion:

As Pat Wadors, Chief Talent Officer at ServiceNow, said, "When we listen and celebrate what is both common and different, we become wiser, more inclusive, and better as an organization."

# Marie Kondo & Her Multinational Organizational Empire

Marie Kondo is a globally famous decluttering and organization consultant known for her famed KonMari method. She is a Best-Selling Author and was featured in a successful Netflix Reality Series that has established her as a cultural phenomenon across the globe. Marie was also featured in TIME's '100 most influential people' in 2015 and Fortune's 40 under 40.

Written by Siya Mehta

Marie was born in Tokyo in 1984 and was interested in organizing from her early years. She would always find herself trying to tidy up bookshelves and volunteering to be the bookshelf manager while her classmates played sports and became class representative. She would actively search for homemaking magazines and research new ways to organize. To practise tidying methods, she would clean her brother and sister's rooms and then proceed to clean her friends' houses and rooms too.

Marie went on to study sociology at Tokyo Woman's Christian University but never let go of her passion for organization. She often offered tidying help to her friends and even wrote her college thesis on decluttering! It was titled, 'How to Declutter Your Apartment —From a Sociological Perspective.' Marie's capstone thesis was also titled, 'Tidying up as seen from the perspective of gender.' Marie's unwavering passion also led to her spending her 18th birthday in the national library, to examine its large

collection of organizational books. At 19, she was finally able to start tidying full-time when she opened her organising consulting business. Before she knew it, she had a six-month waiting list and now a multinational empire.

On reminiscing about her organizational breakthrough, Marie said, "I was obsessed with what I could throw away. One day, I had a kind of nervous breakdown and fainted. I was unconscious for two hours. When I came to, I heard a mysterious voice, like some god of tidying telling me to look at my things more closely. And I realized my mistake: I was only looking for things to throw out. What I should be doing is finding the things I want to keep. Identifying the things that make you happy: that is the work of tidying."

Marie's famous method of organising is known as the 'KonMari' method. The KonMari method preaches first gathering together all of one's belongings, dividing those into categories, evaluating one category at a time and only retaining

items that 'spark joy'. The process of only retaining items that 'spark joy' is known as tokimeku. Tokimeku translates to 'flutter, throb, palpitate' in English. A place is then chosen to store these joyful items and that location should be maintained. Marie believes that this method effectively, quickly and completely helps you organize.

Marie's fame has also accelerated because of her unusual borderline spiritual method of cleaning. Marie makes sure to always greet the space before tidying it. She also thanks objects for their service before throwing them away. Marie has also become easily recognizable with her signature pose of keeping her right hand pointed up and one foot lifted behind her with joy. Her unparalleled philosophy, dedication and passion have attracted clients from across the globe.

Her website, KonMari.com, helps clients connect with Kon-Mari certified consultants in various ranges of categories. This range includes Certified

"Our goal is to help more people tidy their spaces by choosing joy," states KonMari's mission statement. "We are committed to developing the simplest and most effective tools to help you get there."

Green (10 tidying sessions with two clients) to Certified Master (500 tidying sessions with 50 clients). KonMari has also diversified into becoming a lifestyle brand. Through the brand, Marie sells 'Hikidashi Boxes' which are also tidying with four aspects in consideration: clarity, wonder, balance and harmony. The brand is also currently working on developing more products. "Our goal is to help more people tidy their spaces by choosing joy," states KonMari's mission statement. "We are committed to developing the simplest and most effective tools to help you get there."

Her inspirational work ethic and fascinating ideas led to her signing an astounding book deal. Her first book, *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up* was published in Japan in 2010 and was immediately a household favourite. After tremendous success, it was published in the United States in 2014 and became a New York Times bestseller. Since then, the book has been published in multiple languages and has sold over 8 million copies worldwide. Marie's methods immediately generated notable public

interest and led to her earning a spot in TIME Magazine's list of '100 most influential people in 2015'. Marie was also interviewed across the globe, from Ellen DeGeneres to Vogue. In 2016, Marie also published a follow-up titled 'Spark Joy: An Illustrated Master Class on the Art of Organizing and Tidying Up'. Both books preach the KonMari method and have been loved across the world.

Her immense uniqueness and expertise also helped her host her own Netflix series titled 'Tidying Up with Marie Kondo'. In the series, Marie visited American houses and

helped them declutter and transform their homes. Marie reinforces her lifetime pursuit of tidying and providing the niche service in the Netflix series intro by saying, 'My mission is to spark joy in the world through tidying.' The series created distinguished success and Marie was also nominated for the Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Host for a Reality or Competition Program.

Marie's unshaken dedication and passion has astonished millions worldwide. Her ability to turn her niche interest into a multimillion empire independently and commitment to provide sincere service with the aims of improvement in lifestyle have been truly commended and cherished.



Image Credit: Konmari

# The Journey Of An Award-Winning Hotelier

Louis Li is a distinguished entrepreneur. Li has created a fearless brand named Jackalope, which is a luxury hotel and has been named by TIME as one of the greatest places on Earth in 2018. Li's incredible creativity has revolutionised the luxury hotel industry. *Written by Siya Mehta*

Louis Li was brought up in Kunming to one of China's wealthiest families. Since he was the only child of luxury hotel developers, he started an unusual journey of success. Louis began his journey as a teenage television actor and host. After spending years in front of the camera, he realised he also wanted to experience life behind the camera.

In 2008, Li moved to Melbourne to study filmmaking at RMIT University. When he visited Hobart, a city in Tasmania, he was completely bedazzled by David Walsh's Museum of Old and New Art

(MONA). David's artistic creativity was described as, "absurd, mythical and extraordinary that had mass appeal without compromising artistic vision," by Li. After this visit, Li knew that he wanted to pursue an extravagant hotelier life. He etched David's creativity in his mind and started working to create something as mysterious and unique as the MONA.

Li had visited Berlin earlier for a film festival and had come across a sculpture of a jackalope at an antique shop. He was engulfed by the mythical and enigmatic piece and inspiration struck; he knew that his hotel had to be called

Jackalope. Looking back at why the Jackalope resonated with him, Li said, "A creature so rare it exists only in myth is the perfect symbol for my hotels." To date, Li believes that this was his most significant trip.

With these two distinguished and metamorphic experiences in mind, Li set out to make one of the world's most unique and luxurious hotels.

When Li heard that Willow Creek was on sale in 2013, he knew that this was the perfect location for him to create a revolutionary, surreal and modern hotel

in the rural landscape. He reached out to his family for help to finance his passion project and they agreed. Li combined his inherited skill of creating luxury with his passion for immersive storytelling.

"It is quite a personal journey rather than a corporate one. The beauty of Jackalope is that it does not have a formula, it cannot be copied because it is in my mind," remarked Li.

The hotel first began as Li's figment of imagination, he pictured it to be a place where people came to engage their creative core and become the best versions of themselves. With the help of architects, designers and artists, Jackalope became a heaven for the rich, artistic and cultural.

With a monolithic, jet-black exterior, the hotel stands in sharp contrast to the greenery surrounding the region. This juxtaposition demonstrates the hotel as a mythical creature – part-jackrabbit, part-antelope – that exists only in folklore.

One of the key points of difference of the Jackalope property is the deep connection between hospitality and art. "For example, we have a 10,000-lightbulb installation to show the bubbles of the fermentation process. All our artworks are from local artists, so we invite guests to be part of our story,"

said Tracy Atherton, General Manager of Jackalope.

The theme of the hotel is 'alchemy', and this idea of the alchemic, wine-making process permeates the whole journey inside, from the glass apothecary-style tubes on display in the bar, to the 10,000 amber-hued light globes covering the ceiling of the restaurant to make it an extraordinary experience for every guest. The hotel was named as Gourmet Traveller's 'Hotel Of The Year' within only six months of opening and became 'Regional Hotel Of The Year' as well.

"You have this rural scene of poetic rolling hills of vines but it is suddenly like a spaceship has landed on the land; it is rebellious, it's imaginative, it's mysterious," commented Li on the luxurious country getaway.

With the success of Jackalope, Li is looking to expand his business ventures. Li has created a weather-themed 10-storey hotel with artificial clouds across the hotel. To be launched in 2022, this hotel will be located in CBD Melbourne. Li was also able to partner with Random International, an organisation that created a weather-based art installation called the Rain Room. This Rain Room allows visitors to walk between raindrops without getting wet. Li first experienced the Rain Room

in Los Angeles and was completely astounded with the possibility of having it in his next venture.

He then plans to take over the hotel industry in Shanghai followed by Los Angeles within the next couple of years. "My ultimate aim is to turn it into a global brand and I would like to start with my three favourite cities and split my time evenly between the cities until I am 35," said Li.

He wants to continue exploring the field of filmmaking as well, "I still want to do it, I just want to park it, and I think hotels are a good exercise of leadership and creative practice as well." Li added, "I don't see this as a delay of my dreams but as a pathway or culmination of my dreams."

With art and authenticity always at the core of everything he does, Louis Li continues to inspire the world with his extraordinary creativity and talent. He serves as a reminder that while the unconventional can be risky, with passion and hard work, anyone can achieve great heights. In his words, "You have to be a dreamer. If you think about the consequences too much you compromise the vision."

Image Credit: Jackalope

# Four Ways To Approach Difficult Conversations As A Leader

- Alexis Miller.....

Gwyneth Paltrow, American Actress, said, “You’re not learning anything unless you’re having the difficult conversations.”

And rightly so, not having difficult conversations has proven costly for organisations around the world. A CPP Inc. study of workplace conflict revealed that employees in the United States of America spent roughly 2.8 hours every week dealing with conflict. Thirty-three per cent of employees report that the conflict led to personal injury and attacks, and 22 percent report that it led to illness and absence from work. Ten percent reported that project failure was a direct result of the conflict. At the same time, a study by Psychometrics in Canada showed that 32 percent of employees have to deal with conflict regularly. More alarming is a recent survey by Accenture, revealing that 35 percent of employees leave their jobs voluntarily because of internal politics even in this challenging economic climate.

Instead of avoiding difficult conversations, find the courage to start constructively confronting people with skill and empathy. Here are a few ways to approach difficult conversations

## 1. Focus On Adding Value To Both Parties

Before approaching someone to have a difficult conversation, ask yourself the true intent of the meeting; is it due to your dislike towards the person or is it a genuine conflict that needs resolving. Assess how this conversation can add value to you, the person, and the organisation as a whole. Larry Boyer, Trusted Advisor at Success Rockets LLC, said, “If you need to have a conversation that is difficult for you, start with asking yourself why you need to have the conversation. When you can answer that question yourself, you may find the conversation is not as difficult as you fear.”



## 2. Be Empathetic And Show That You Care

Remember that this conversation is a two-way street. Start by asking how they are doing? How do they like their work? Any feedback they would have for you or the organisation? Then proceed to give your feedback about their performance or the issue that you want to discuss. By doing this, it won’t come across as a personal attack and rather as an attempt to help them grow in their field and improve their performance. Danielle Allen, the Managing Partner at Building Impact, says, “When we’re receiving bad news, we tend to block out positive things, including our relationship with the person delivering it. So I start here and I then try to be as direct and succinct as possible on what the bad news is and what the implications are for the person.”

## 3. Practice And Prepare For The Conversation

This is a very effective method, always start by writing down what you are going to say and the goal of the conversation. You can even make this more effective by role-playing with a friend or colleague; they can give you insights and feedback about what to say and help you gain skills for the future. Daisy

Jing, Founder and CEO of Banish, says, “I rehearse whatever I say. I list and break down the things I have to discuss to avoid distraction and saying hurtful things that may cause further issues or conflict.”

## 4. Have A Positive Attitude

You need to walk into the room with the right attitude. The other person may display emotions ranging from angry to upset, and you cannot take that personally. Be prepared and remember always to stay calm and composed. Stephanie Wells, Founder of Formidable Forms, says, “You need to prepare yourself and the other person for difficult news by having a positive attitude and practicing patience. They may not like what you have to say, but it’s important to remain calm and firm.”

## In Conclusion:

As William Ellery Channing, American Theologian, said, “Difficulties are meant to rouse, not discourage. The human spirit is to grow strong by conflict.” Always approach the problem with empathy and logic, and it will make your team grow more robust in the process.

# Four Ways To Make Your Work Stand Out While Working Remotely

- Justin Roberts.....

Working remotely has traditionally held a bad reputation; however, as more companies adopt work-from-home policies, there has been a positive shift with several benefits like better work-life balance, lower emissions and higher productivity. However, there’s one thread dangling in the equation. Inequity in promotion between remote and in-person workers is a problem that is yet to be rectified. It had existed well before the pandemic forced many people into work-from-home situations across the world. As the saying goes, ‘out of sight, out of mind’, can be rightly used in this context.

Researchers from the Stanford Graduate School of Business conducted a study in 2015 in China. They found that while people working from home proved to be more productive – 13% more, to be exact – they were not rewarded with promotions at nearly the same rate as their in-office colleagues.

While it may seem like an arduous task to stand out within your organization, especially while working remotely, there are several ways to set yourself apart to be heard and seen beyond emails and routine phone calls.

## 1. Research And Pitch Innovative Ideas And Projects

Go the extra mile and find possible solutions to existing problems before the problem gets blown out of proportion; the key is always to be proactive rather than reactive. Do not be afraid to speak up. Suggest new projects, offer new ideas. Try to allot one hour every day to research to come up with improvements to improve routine tasks. This is the perfect opportunity to put in the work and demonstrate your value to your manager or team lead by going beyond your everyday tasks and adding value to the company. “Show you’re not just thinking about your position but the company’s performance as a whole,” says Zach Cusimano, COO at mobile application maker Bizness Apps. “If you

see a process that could be improved, let someone know. Managers love to see critical thinking.”

## 2. Act And Dress Professionally

With Zoom calls leading the way for remote working, it is imperative always to dress the way you would at the office, especially if the visual component of the call is on. While this gives viewers the impression that you are well dressed and ready for work, it also has several benefits linked to productivity. Research by Joy V. Peluchette and Katherine Karl found, “Respondents felt most authoritative, trustworthy, and competent when wearing formal business attire, but friendliest when wearing casual or business casual attire.”

Important reminder: Be on time every day and always meet deadlines. Working from another location can not be an excuse for missed deadlines or tardiness; instead, it should reflect your efficiency and good time management skills.

## 3. Communicate Effectively

This point has been repeated consistently in every remote working brief, but it is of utmost importance. Always list down the day’s tasks before you begin and work towards completing everything on the list to the best of your abilities. If your colleague hasn’t given you an update about a particular task that had to be completed that day, get in touch with them, call them if necessary, strengthen your follow-up game and constantly be updated with all the projects you are currently handling. If you are working on a specific project, always send reminders at the start of the day to every person involved, so everyone is up-to-date on the progress and the tasks to be completed for the particular day.

Every bit of communication with your colleagues is a golden ticket to develop your work relationships with them. Engage in small talk, learn about their kids, their family life, how they are

dealing with the pandemic; the more comfortable you get with them, the more they will respect and enjoy working with you.

## 4. Always Be Ready And Organized

Organize your work. Have everything ready in folders and share access with everyone in the organization; that if you are asked for something at any point in time, it will be readily available to you or your colleague working with a 6-hour time difference.

Have a plan for every task. Write down agendas for every meeting with no time to spare. Be absolutely certain that you have a solid internet connection that will work well during that important presentation or meeting without buffering during crucial points.

As Kyle Wong, CEO and Co-Founder of Pixlee, said, “Organizations place a premium on individuals who follow through on tasks. If you can prove that you can consistently own projects from start to finish, you will not only get promoted, but you’ll also make yourself indispensable.”

## In Conclusion:

Working remotely may require additional effort to demonstrate that you are an active component of the organization. An important point to keep in mind: never let the quality of your work deviate; as Vik Patel, CEO of Future Hosting, said, “Competence, diligence, intelligence, loyalty—these all matter, but what matters most is the inherent will to do the best work possible. The work is what matters, and employees who take it personally, who own their work as a reflection of their values and take pride in doing good work, are the employees I trust with positions of responsibility.”

# The Assiduous Engineer Who Changed The Lives Of Ghanaians



Image Credit: sxswedu.com

Patrick Awuah is no ordinary man. After receiving a stellar and distinctive education, he decided to pass on this gift by starting Ashesi University, a not-for-profit institution in Ghana, instead of continuing at his stable job in Microsoft Seattle. His philanthropy and hard work helped him rank as one of the World's 50 Greatest Leaders by Fortune in 2015.

Written by Brianna Da Cruz

Patrick grew up in Accra, the capital of Ghana, during the military dictatorship. He attended Achimota School and was also a house prefect. This was Patrick's first leadership achievement with many more to follow.

Patrick was one of the few fortunate who was able to escape Ghana during the destructive dictatorship. He was able to move to the U.S. on a full scholarship to attend Swarthmore College in 1985. At Swarthmore, Patrick earned undergraduate degrees in Engineering and Economics.

He was immediately recruited at Microsoft after graduation as a program manager and software engineer.

After joining Microsoft, Patrick returned to Ghana for a short visit, his first in more than five years. Upon reminiscing about his experience, Patrick said, "I was extremely disillusioned. Nothing worked. I came back to the U.S. and told my colleagues at Microsoft, 'I'd never return to Africa to live.'"

Nevertheless, the future had a different plan for Patrick.

When crises erupted in Rwanda and Sudan, Patrick started doubting his seemingly strong belief of never returning to Africa. Patrick felt accountable when one of the Vice Presidents at Microsoft initiated a campaign to support Rwanda. "I remember feeling extremely guilty because here was an American, not an African, who was doing something about a crisis that I had not even thought to do," said Patrick.

However, it was not until the birth of his son that he realised that he wanted

to contribute to his home country. Looking back to the moment he knew that he had a responsibility to fulfil, Patrick said, "When I looked for the first time into my son's eyes, I realized I had been extremely arrogant to think that I had within me the power to disown a continent. Africa will matter to my children, to the way they see themselves; the way the world sees them."

Patrick proceeded to quit Microsoft in 1997 to focus on his plan to help Ghana. During his time at Microsoft, Patrick had gained a reputation for taking on challenging projects and successfully completing them. He further used these skills to identify the root of problems in Ghana and worked towards repairing these.

Patrick believed that a prominent cause of problems in Ghana was poor leadership at all levels. He compared his experience studying in the U.S. to the traditional education offered in Ghana. This comparison allowed Patrick to analyse that the U.S. focused on critical thinking and problem solving while Ghana's educational system tested the ability to memorise and recall narrow subject matter.

After careful consideration, he knew that he wanted to build a liberal arts university to improve the educational system in Ghana. This led to the birth of Ashesi University. The name is derived from the word 'beginning' in Akan, one of Ghana's native languages.

However, it was difficult to leave Seattle and move back to Ghana. "It's hard to leave a good job and go off and do something this risky," he said. Since he was about to undertake a massive

challenge, Patrick wanted to make sure that he was fully equipped to change the course of Ghana's educational system. Patrick enrolled in an MBA program at the prestigious UC Berkeley.

His experience at Berkeley helped him develop a framework for building the revolutionary Ashesi University. UC Berkeley and Swarthmore both supported Patrick's project by co-designing a curriculum that combined the traditional liberal arts college experience with technical majors. He graduated from Berkeley in 1999 and moved back to Ghana with his family immediately to create Ashesi.

The nation's first liberal arts college, Ashesi, quickly gained a reputation for innovation, communication and leadership. In 2012, it was ranked as one of the top ten Most Respected Companies in Ghana and was the first educational institution in history to win the award. Patrick was also named as the 4th Most Respected CEO in Ghana in the same award ceremony. The first class of students graduated in 2006 and the university already made its mark in history by inspiring and educating the next generation of leaders.

Patrick went on to receive the prestigious World Innovation Summit for Education Prize for Ashesi's impact in Africa. He also won the MacArthur Fellowship and the McNulty Prize. Patrick was also presented with the Membership of the Order of the Volta by the President of Ghana, one of Ghana's highest and most prestigious awards, given to philanthropists who have dedicated their goals to servicing the country. To further recognise Patrick's extraordinary efforts, he was nominated as a Global Leader 2007 by the World Economic Forum. He also won prestigious awards from Microsoft, UC Berkeley and the Millennium Excellence Award for Educational Development.

With Patrick's unwavering dedication to service and passion to overcome educational inequality, he has inspired and changed lives in Ghana. In Patrick's words, "I was stalling because of fear of failure. But if I didn't try, I would have failed anyway so – why not try?"

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# Making An Impact On The Food Tech Industry



Shama Sukul Lee is a qualified Software Engineer turned Food Technology Entrepreneur. She is the Founder of Sunfed, a company that uses clean technology to make flavorful meats without harming animals and the planet. Lee has a vision to create a highly scalable regenerative protein company that can feed the world through sustainable practices. She believes small changes in the food system can significantly impact the world.

*Written by Brianna Da Cruz*

Shama Sukul Lee is an engineer born and raised in New Zealand. Her journey began in 2012; she said, “I was feeling really unfulfilled, and so much so that I couldn’t get up and go to work.” She continued, “I wasn’t doing what gave me meaning.”

That’s when Lee decided to take a year off from her role as a Software Engineer. “I had a bit of an existential crisis. I started to feel unfulfilled, unsettled and hollow,” she said. She took this time off, and shut herself off from all social media sites, and took time off to think deeply about her purpose in life. Coincidentally, she was also on a personal journey to eat less meat. “I was a huge meat eater; I grew up eating meat,” said Sukul Lee. “When I gave it up, I struggled. I relapsed a few times. I was not very well versed in eating other kinds of foods because I think eating meat makes you lazy. You have to figure out what food to eat, I was completely ignorant.”

In a process common to many startups, the personal coalesced with the professional and a new business was born. She founded Sunfed Foods by raising \$10 million in funds and gathered a group of employees to help her manufacture a product that would be an excellent alternative to meat.

“Everything I went through was not like the texture of meat, it was more like tofu,” said Lee. “With meat, there’s a mouth feel — the bite, the texture, and I was missing that quite a bit.”

She was determined to create a product with high protein, low carb and nutritional benefits of meat while using natural and simple products available. After Lee struggled with letting go of meat, she was eager to not come from that place of judgment or preachiness. Lee said it is important to her that she and her brand aren’t preachy regarding veganism. Lee said, “I am not judging your diet choices, and I don’t consider Sunfed a vegan brand. Instead, Sunfed’s simply offering consumers a choice.”

She continued, “Everyone’s saying we’re eating too much meat, but no one’s really putting forward a solution for it. I didn’t want to be part of a campaign of judging and preaching. I’m a solutions architect.”

The energy consumed in the food production industry eclipses all other sectors, including transport. “As the industry is more intensified and grows in scale, the risks also grow – of damage to soil, water, deforestation and food safety. It’s the definition of unsustainable,” Lee admonished. Her small team, including her husband Hayden, set out to find an alternative, which could be sustainable even as it scaled up. They landed on yellow peas for the chicken-free vegan meat, which is a fast-growing crop and doesn’t require excessive water or negatively impact the soil.

The fake chicken meat is made from a shortlist of ingredients, including natural yeast extract, maize starch, pea protein, rice bran oil, pea fibre, pumpkin and water. However, Lee says the magic lies in her specially made machines that give the plant proteins more structure to mimic animal proteins and taste better.

“I was forced into hardware engineering

“Everyone’s saying we’re eating too much meat, but no one’s really putting forward a solution for it.”

to solve the problem,” Lee said. “We had to design and build machines ... we had to try so many combinations of ingredients to get the right ones, and the more minimal you get, the harder it gets.”

By 2017, her chicken-free vegan meat was sold at two of New Zealand’s biggest supermarkets and was set to launch in Australia, along with a beef-free burger that was soon a best-seller. “The reason I keep going is because my mission is much bigger than me,” she said. “My intent is to leave the world better than I found it.”

Sunfed then launched its new bacon product in 2020 to keep up with the growing demand for animal-based bacon. “We launched it at Meatstock 2020, a live music and barbeque festival, of all places. The hardest audience you can find. And we were the most popular stand. I had bodyguards and I didn’t need them!” Lee said. It passed the taste test even with the harshest critics, emerging victorious in the plant-based meats industry.

While sustainable food technology is an area for unprecedented growth, Lee believes that there are multiple areas where startups can use the power of business for positive change. Lee said, “COVID-19 clearly showed what is essential to humanity. I advise entrepreneurs to consider what the real foundational aspects of humanity are and transform those.” She continued, “That is the biggest bang for buck, that will make the biggest difference.”

Lee describes entrepreneurship as a personal journey, requiring reserves of energy and self-knowledge. “Starting a company means you’re constantly being stress-tested,” Lee says. “There is one challenge after another, and you have to learn to enjoy the process or you’ll crumble with the pressure and fast pace.”



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