

GLOBAL Leaders TODAY

JUNE 2024

Innovation Amid
Adversity: **Shadi Küizam's**
Blueprint for Growth in
Challenging Times

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Walking the Talk: Insights from
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SHYAM R.

TOP BUSINESS LEADERS IN ASIA 2024

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on Artificial Intelligence & Knowledge Processing (AIKP'24)

August 22 - 24, 2024

Organized By,

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In Association with University of St. Thomas, MN, USA and
University of Johannesburg School of Business, South Africa.



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Topics

Theme 1

Artificial Intelligence & Knowledge Processing

Theme 2

Machine Learning

Theme 3

Deep Learning

Theme 4

Intelligent Control

Theme 5

Artificial Vision

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Shyam R. is a seasoned entrepreneur and the Chief Executive Officer of Lemon Peak, a leading software and digital marketing company. With over two decades of experience in the industry, Shyam has established himself as a visionary leader dedicated to driving innovation, delivering top-notch quality, and fostering a culture of integrity within his organization.

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THE QUEEN OF KING COFFEE: EXCLUSIVE INSIGHTS FROM VIETNAMESE COFFEE'S LEADING WOMEN ENTREPRENEUR

Le Hoang Diep Thao is the trailblazing founder and CEO of TNI Corporation - the parent company of Vietnamese coffee titans Trung Nguyen and King Coffee.



INNOVATION AMID ADVERSITY: SHADI KÜZAM'S BLUEPRINT FOR GROWTH IN CHALLENGING TIMES

Shadi Kuzam is a seasoned professional with over 30 years of experience in the construction and project management industry. He is the CEO of KuzAM Group.



GLOBAL Leaders TODAY

From the Editor

Dear Valued Readers,

It is with great pleasure that we present our highly anticipated "Business Leaders in Asia" issue, a celebration of the visionaries and changemakers shaping the region's economic landscape.

Asia, a continent rich in diversity and cultural heritage, has emerged as a powerhouse on the global stage. Its dynamic economies and innovative spirit have given rise to a remarkable pool of business leaders who have not only excelled in their respective industries but have also left an indelible mark on the world.

In this issue, we take you on a journey through the inspiring stories of these exceptional leaders. From tech titans who have revolutionized the way we live and work to industry captains who have transformed traditional sectors with their forward-thinking approach, these leaders have defied conventions and pushed the boundaries of what's possible.

Their success is not merely measured by financial metrics but by their commitment to excellence, ability to anticipate and adapt to changing market dynamics, and relentless pursuit of innovation. These leaders have not only created wealth but have also fostered inclusive growth, empowered communities, and championed sustainable practices.

As you dive into these captivating narratives, you will gain valuable insights into the mindsets, strategies, and philosophies that have propelled these visionaries to the forefront of their respective fields. Their stories testify to the power of perseverance, resilience, and the indomitable human spirit.

We hope that this issue will inspire you to embrace new challenges, think boldly, and strive for greatness in your own endeavors. Join us in celebrating the remarkable achievements of these trailblazers and in acknowledging their contributions to the global business landscape.

Warm regards,
Elena Arnaiz
Editor-in-Chief,
Global Leaders Today

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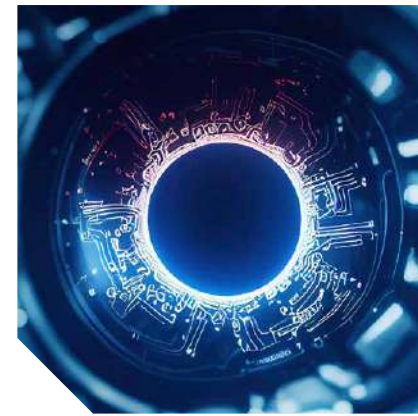
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Written by Sandeep

UNVEILING THE TOP BUSINESS LEADERS STEERING ASIA'S GROWTH IN 2024

Asia stands poised at the threshold of a historic transformation, where economic prowess and social evolution converge to define the future. Asia commands the spotlight as the epicenter of global growth with a staggering 4.7 billion inhabitants, encompassing 60% of the world's population across 50 diverse nations. By 2025, business in Asia will account for almost half of the world's GDP and will be home to four of the largest global economies – China, India, Japan, and Indonesia. By 2050, two-thirds of the world's middle class will be in Asia, and by 2050, Asia will account for twenty of the world's top 50 cities ranked by GDP.

Within this vast and dynamic landscape, a select group of visionary leaders emerges as the driving force behind Asia's unprecedented growth and innovation. From the bustling streets of Shanghai to the bustling markets of Mumbai, these leaders are at the forefront of shaping the future of global commerce.

According to recent studies, Asia's GDP is projected to surpass that of the rest of the world combined by 2050, highlighting the region's undeniable impact on the global economy. This meteoric rise is fueled by visionary leaders who possess a unique blend of strategic foresight, entrepreneurial spirit, and unwavering commitment to excellence.

Our special issue, "Top Business Leaders in Asia 2024," spotlights these remarkable leaders—the architects of Asia's economic renaissance. Through candid conversations, we seek to uncover what sets these top-performing leaders apart and explore their strategies to navigate the complexities of the modern business landscape.

These leaders demonstrate a keen ability to adapt to changing market dynamics, innovate in the face of adversity, and foster a culture of inclusivity and collaboration within their organizations.

However, the journey towards leadership excellence is not without its challenges. As Asia's economies evolve, leaders must grapple with geopolitical instability, technological disruption, and environmental sustainability. Yet, true leadership shines brightest in the face of these challenges.

As we uncover the secrets of Asia's top business leaders, we invite you to join us in celebrating their achievements, learning from their experiences, and charting a course toward a brighter future for Asia and the world. Together, let us forge a path toward prosperity, progress, and shared success in the dynamic landscape of Asian business.



SHYAM R.'S STRATEGIES FOR NICHE DOMINATION



Shyam R. is a seasoned entrepreneur and the Chief Executive Officer of Lemon Peak, a leading software and digital marketing company. With over two decades of experience in the industry, Shyam has established himself as a visionary leader dedicated to driving innovation, delivering top-notch quality, and fostering a culture of integrity within his organization.

Written by Sherlyn Gomes

The big thing we look for is a specialized niche they operate in, and we evaluate what percentage of their work is one-off custom dev versus which pieces have real product potential to be packaged up.

In this insightful interview, Shyam delves into the pivotal moments and experiences that have shaped his leadership style and guided his entrepreneurial journey. His childhood on the move exposed him to the rich diversity of India and the core values that define Lemon Peak's DNA. Shyam shares his unique perspectives and the strategies he employs to stay ahead of the curve in an ever-evolving technological landscape.

Were any specific childhood experiences significantly influenced your career path and leadership style?

A huge part of who I am today traces back to my childhood on the move. With my dad's job forcing us to relocate every few years, I got incredibly valuable exposure to different parts of the country from a young age—Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, you name it. Instead of being rooted in one place, those early years opened my eyes to India's diverse cultures, languages, and people.

Even later, when I pursued engineering, that experience came in handy. The campus drew students from all over, another melting pot of diversity. But by that point, I had already developed the ability to build relationships naturally across all those different contexts. Looking back now, I can't help but feel that early, intimate exposure to India's diversity laid the seeds for so much of my personal growth and professional success.

After working in New York for a couple of years, where that early exposure undoubtedly helped, it's almost poetic that Chennai remains the only city where I've truly laid down roots, having lived here for over a decade. The place that introduced me to India's vibrant diversity is also the one I've made my home.

What unique elements define Lemon Peak's DNA in an industry buzzing with competition?

Let me give you a quick rundown on Lemon Peak. We operate across two main verticals. First, we're a sales enablement powerhouse, primarily serving the telecom giants of the US market. Over the past decade, we've racked up an impressive array of awards and accolades. But what truly sets us apart is our commitment to quality—top-notch, best-in-class services that keep our clients coming back.

Integrity is another cornerstone value deeply ingrained in our DNA. American companies often hesitate due to security and compliance concerns. For some, it's a legitimate factor that can put our country on the back burner. But we've worked diligently to overcome those hurdles through a sterling track record and engendering deep trust and confidence in our capabilities.

On the software side, we're all about specialization in specific niches. Previously, we knocked it out of the park in financial services, but now our focus has strategically shifted to infrastructure management. That's where we're currently doubling down our efforts. We identify

a niche, focus on dominating that space for a few years, and then seamlessly pivot to the next one.

How does Lemon Peak embrace innovation and actively cultivate a culture where groundbreaking ideas flourish?

At Lemon Peak, we do not merely chase ephemeral technological trends or buzzwords. Our approach towards the verticals we pursue, whether traditional software services, business process outsourcing, or our sales enablement offerings, is calculated and visionary.

For instance, we incorporated AI and advanced data analytics into our products and services years before ChatGPT became a household name - we're talking 5-4 years ahead of the curve. That heavy data orientation, fusing AI capabilities across everything we build and every business line we venture into, has been fundamental to how we innovate and stay ahead of the pack.

Cultivating a pervasive culture of continuous innovation, however, is not without its challenges, especially within the relatively traditional industries we operate in. We must acknowledge that transformative, disruptive changes in such spheres are often dictated by vendor dynamics or broader industry forces, mainly outside our immediate sphere of influence. Nonetheless, we have carved a distinct niche by wholeheartedly embracing cutting-edge technologies like AI as a core means of injecting innovation into our value proposition.



Beyond meeting client needs, can you narrate a standout instance where Lemon Peak's team went above and beyond to meet and exceed client expectations?

Let me give you a real-life example of how we walk the talk on quality - our current partnership with a US Media Giant. Quality metrics are not merely perfunctory checkboxes but the guiding force that shapes every aspect of our service delivery to this esteemed client. In fact, we have strategically decided to reduce our profit margins to uphold and surpass our client's stringent quality benchmarks.

One must understand that we have weathered challenging periods while bootstrapping our operations and navigating times of significant financial strain and volatility. However, our dedication to upholding the highest quality standards remained inviolable, even during circumstances that necessitated prudent fiscal austerity measures.

Can you share a project you are working on that you are excited about?

Absolutely! I have invested in a product called Face5. Lately, our focus has been on small businesses, even single-owner outfits, operating in the custom software development or product space. It's not your typical wide-eyed startup scene—we're talking about established but often bootstrapped companies, some breaking even and others not yet.

A group of partners and I have been actively investing in and acquiring stakes in companies like these. The big thing we look for is a specialized niche they operate in, and we evaluate what percentage of their work is one-off custom dev versus which pieces have real product potential to be packaged up.

Last year, we made one such personal investment in a company that caught our eye. They had this excellent infrastructure management application they had built, which we rebranded as Face5. We're doubling down on pushing this product, aiming to implement

it across the Indian and Middle Eastern markets. Sure, we have competitors, no doubt. But we're pouring our time and resources into further developing and scaling Face5.

How do you envision the software and digital marketing industry evolving in the next few years?

When it comes to technology, one pattern is glaringly obvious. Nothing lasts more

But what truly sets us apart is our commitment to quality—top-notch, best-in-class services that keep our clients coming back.

than a 5-year shelf life these days. Just look back half a decade ago - it was all about the blockchain craze. Everyone was convinced this revolutionary tech was the future, poised to reign supreme for the next 20 years minimum. Fast forward to today, and AI and ChatGPT are the hot topics on everyone's lips. The hype cycles happen at lightning speed.

But observing the vast generational gaps in real-time puts that volatility into perspective. 20 years ago, the wealth of knowledge and information available to someone that age today is simply mind-boggling in comparison. Back then, research meant physically sourcing books or waiting for eons for a webpage to load groaningly. Now? A world's worth of data is at your fingertips.

That's what keeps you humble as an experienced professional—realizing that the disruption cycle is accelerating so rapidly that those of us with 20-25 years under our belts sometimes struggle to keep pace. Half a decade from now, we may be discussing brilliant quantum computing breakthroughs eclipsing AI altogether.

How does Lemon Peak actively contribute to its communities or support broader social causes?

It's not something I tend to broadcast, but I believe there comes a point where you need to own your contributions to society. Despite being a relatively small operation without millions to throw around, giving back has been deeply ingrained in our values and culture.

We are based in Chennai, a region constantly grappling with natural disasters like floods and cyclones. We've made it a point to collaborate with various independent trusts and organizations, lending a hand wherever needed during those tough times.

It's not about grandstanding—just my management team quietly setting aside some funds to support relief efforts, regardless of caste, creed, or religion. There is no big PR buzz, but we make sure to contribute however we can. Two key areas have become a special focus: women's empowerment initiatives and children's welfare programs.

As much as I'm dedicated to my professional journey now, I plan to double down on that philanthropic work in 10 years. Once I've taken this career as far as possible, I want to step away from being the day-to-day business leader and take a more active, frontline role in driving these causes forward.

The goal is to set up an NGO formally - it's still in the early stages, but it's very much in the pipeline. There must be a greater life purpose



than just materialistic achievements. So that's the end game - taking the team by my side and transitioning into that NGO work part-time down the road, using all we have built to give back indefinitely in whichever ways we can, large or small. It's the higher calling that makes all the blood, sweat, and tears worth it.

What valuable advice would you offer for budding leaders based on your journey and experiences?

Trust your gut instincts implicitly. And develop a relentless perseverance - never, ever give up. I know it sounds cliché, this idea of the plucky, courageous entrepreneur. But let me tell you, once you live that life day-to-day, it's anything but charming. You wake up elated one morning, utterly despondent by nightfall. Other times, the inverse - depths of despair dissolving into euphoric highs, all within the same 24 hours. It's a vicious cycle entrepreneurs must be prepared to white-knuckle through.

Let me be blunt - I'm no genius or special talent. I'm average at best. My sole differentiator has been an obsessive commitment to outworking the competition. There are zero shortcuts to achieving meaningful success. It's a harsh truth.

Sure, you may stumble into a quick windfall once, but easy money has a knack for evaporating just as rapidly. Stick to your core principles and let your integrity be the guiding light.

My sole differentiator has been an obsessive commitment to outworking the competition. There are zero shortcuts to achieving meaningful success.

NAVIGATING THE AI REVOLUTION: A STRATEGIC GUIDE FOR BUSINESS LEADERS

Written by contributing writer Peter Verster



About the author:

Peter Verster is the author of “AI for Business” and Founder of Northell Partners, a data and AI solutions consultancy in the UK. With over 20 years of experience in strategically applying data and AI to real-world problems, Peter’s direct, pragmatic, and hands-on style has earned him the respect of leaders in some of the world’s largest organizations. With solid academic foundations earned at Saïd Business School, University of Oxford, Peter enables businesses to engage with more customers, optimize operations and transform their products and services. Born and bred in South Africa, Peter now lives in Cheshire, England, with his wife and two daughters. He loves golf and thrives at the intersection of technology and business.

It feels like AI has burst into our lives in an extraordinarily rapid way. Technologies that could once only be imagined are becoming reality in front of our eyes. AI has become the zeitgeist, the conversation of the moment. In response, many leaders are looking for ways to incorporate AI and machine learning (ML) into their businesses to enhance their productivity and give them a competitive edge. With hundreds of new AI applications entering the marketplace on an almost weekly basis, understanding the options and knowing where to start can feel overwhelming.

However, there is a strategic imperative for leaders to enhance their offer in line with major digital players. AI can bring unique and exciting opportunities to engage with customers, meet their needs, and create additional value. What’s clear is that ignoring the shift to digital and the opportunities presented by AI isn’t an option for businesses that want to meet the rapidly changing needs and expectations of their customers. That’s why businesses must use AI to enhance their business model, and having the right talent on board is the too-often-missed element in AI project success.

Your business model: the lens through which to view AI

To begin the journey into any digital transformation, you must strip right back to the core of your company – your business model. Business models vary across companies, but, in essence, they are the vehicle through which your company creates and delivers value to your customers, employees, and partners. They are the mechanisms you use to drive profit.

Using your business model as the lens through which to view AI will help identify some of the challenges arising for your business. With rapid advances in technology and digital capability, consumers’ ideas of what value means are constantly shifting. Customers – their needs, behaviors, and expectations – are changing faster than businesses can keep up with. For consumers, value is becoming more elusive as it evolves beyond the simple definition of ‘utility of goods’.

However, companies must not only keep up with the AI tools available and the expectations of their customers but also navigate the interplay between these two axes. In this paradigm, digital is not the end but the means to deliver the highest-quality customer value proposition (CVP). While this requires a new way of operating based on continuously evolving and understanding what constitutes value in the customer’s mind, the reward can be huge. It’s the ability to respond more quickly, pivot with the market, and explore new revenue streams. It’s the ability to capitalize on the opportunities presented by AI, leading to sustained competitive advantage for those who invest in it.

Talent is the secret ingredient in a successful strategy

While most companies have a fair idea of their CVP (Customer Value Proposition), many have never given thought to their EVP (Employee Value Proposition). This could be a strategic mistake. A 2015 study on innovation conducted by Chalmers University of Technology, using Google as a subject, concluded that the top two factors contributing to Google’s success are individual employees followed by employee culture. They attributed both to the talent selection process.

For a company to create an environment in which innovation will thrive, employing the right people is a crucial step. Having a diverse leadership team, for example, will result in a more innovative organization that is 70% more likely to capture new markets. A study conducted by Forbes showed that workplace diversity is the key driver to innovation.

As Steve Forbes has noted, “The real source

of wealth and capital in this era is not material things – it’s the human mind, the human spirit, the human imagination, and our faith in the future.” This is a crucial point to remember on your AI journey. AI is not a replacement for human talent. Instead, it’s a tool for talented individuals to use to unlock new levels of creativity and productivity.

The foresight to see the potential of AI and the creative ability to realize and use digital innovations at pace will set companies over and above their competitors, but this requires high-performing colleagues to be in the right place to bring the necessary value.

An industry study by McKinsey discovered that high-performing team members are up to 800% more productive than average employees. On a typical three-year project, this would mean that replacing just 20% of average-ability talent with this high-performing talent would see that project completed in one year, getting you to the market up to two years faster than the competition. Ensuring these employees are properly skilled and equipped to use AI creatively could drive further improvements and operational efficiencies.

These are the essential steps that businesses must take in order to succeed in implementing a resilient, effective business model. Increases in employee productivity are what will, in turn, lead to the successes in AI that all businesses aspire to. But AI innovation starts with having the right team in place, and companies must ensure that this is where progress is made if they are to gain a competitive advantage.



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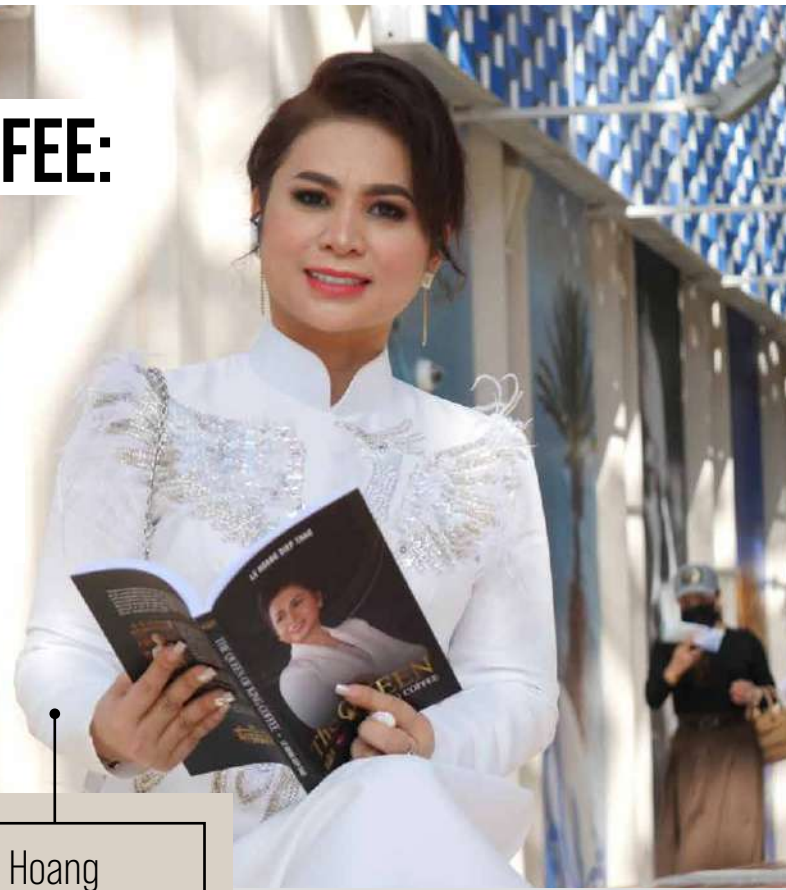
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THE QUEEN OF KING COFFEE: EXCLUSIVE INSIGHTS FROM VIETNAMESE COFFEE'S LEADING WOMEN ENTREPRENEUR



We had the distinct honor of interviewing Le Hoang Diep Thao, the trailblazing founder and CEO of TNI Corporation - the parent company of Vietnamese coffee titans Trung Nguyen and King Coffee. Since 1996, Madame Diep Thao has been a pioneering force shaping Vietnam's coffee industry.

In this exclusive interview, Madame Diep Thao outlines the strategic thinking and values underpinning her global success.

Written by Justin Roberts

Can you share the inspiration and vision that led you to become a leader in Vietnam's coffee industry with our readers?

On the world coffee map, with over 75 coffee-growing countries, Vietnam is ranked second among the world's largest coffee exporters. In my hometown, coffee isn't just a beverage; it's a way of life, a cultural treasure that flows through our veins and ignites our spirits.

The bold, distinctive flavor of Vietnamese coffee has captured the hearts and palates of

millions worldwide, fueling our audacious dream of conquering the world with our liquid gold. As a trailblazing female entrepreneur in the Vietnamese coffee industry, I've poured my heart and soul into this mission. In my autobiography, "The Queen of King Coffee," I bare my journey, offering an intimate glimpse into the triumphs and challenges that have shaped my path.

With resilience and fierce determination, I've dedicated my life to elevating the value and recognition of our exceptional coffee beans on the global stage.

What strategies did you employ to achieve rapid international growth, expanding to 61 countries, and what challenges did you encounter?

Through relentless drive and visionary leadership, I pioneered the growth of a coffee empire, transforming Vietnam's agricultural landscape. In 1996, my breakout success with Trung Nguyen coffee sparked the third wave of coffee in the local industry, paralleling the rise of global coffee franchises. This milestone marked a cultural shift and catalyzed Vietnam's ascendance as a coffee superpower.

But I aspired for more. Attending a conference in Germany, I glimpsed the vast potential of instant coffee. Defying naysayers, I remained undeterred, steadfast in my vision to seize this uncharted territory. So I founded G7 instant coffee, which dethroned the industry giant Nescafe within eight short years. This is not only a big milestone on my development path but also evidence that if manufacturers do not consider coffee as a simple raw commodity and know how to take full advantage of the strengths of Vietnamese Robusta coffee, then they will own fragrant coffee products really delicious. G7



About King Coffee:

King Coffee is internationally recognized when present in more than 120 countries. In particular, in the US market, King Coffee has been distributed since 2016 on all Vietnamese and American supermarket systems such as Costco, Aldi, Amazon, Walmart, T.J.Maxx, etc. The brand has a sustainable presence on Alibaba's T-Mall, where King Coffee quickly became one of the four best-selling brands since entering the Chinese market in March 2017. In addition, in April 2021, King Coffee opened its first coffee shop located at Anaheim Garden Walk (near Disneyland), starting a plan to widely deploy brand franchising in this country. Please connect with us to discover more at: <https://kingcoffee.com/en> or via email: communications@nicoracion.com. Don't forget to follow King Coffee's fanpage here: <https://www.facebook.com/us.kingcoffee/>

etched its name in history as the first Vietnamese coffee brand with truly global reach.

In 2016, I set my sights even higher, establishing King Coffee to culminate my work into a new, world-leading coffee empire. With an international-first strategy, King Coffee converged of all the quintessence and rapidly affirmed its reputation globally before even launching domestically and continued to be successful.

Can you elaborate on your leadership philosophy and the principles that guide your decision-making as a leader in the coffee business?

True leadership demands vision, commitment, resilience, and decisiveness. In my book, I distill my leadership philosophy by metaphorizing water's fluid yet unyielding nature. As an independent businesswoman, I embody this dynamic life force.

I believe that "I am my own woman, Le Hoang Diep Thao, independent, self-reliant, and like a stream of water. So that I will surge and

flow like a rushing water, never accepting defeat." Like water carving rivers through persistence alone, I have developed the courage and strategic leadership to shape my destiny. My approach shows feminine wisdom, redefining strength. Through flowing with purpose, I have remained steady in my vision to build something greater.

How do you navigate the diverse global market to ensure Vietnamese coffee stands out and resonates with consumers worldwide?

For over a century, coffee has coursed through Vietnam's veins, etching itself into the nation's culture. The journey began in the 1850s when coffee first arrived from France. From that, coffee had emerged as a new beverage, slowly spreading from cities to the countryside, thus became intertwined with Vietnamese lifestyle and customs.

As founder of King Coffee, I want people to know that nearly half the coffee they drink worldwide contains Vietnamese Robusta. I've made it my life's mission to spread Vietnam's unique coffee culture worldwide. King Coffee draws on our rich culinary heritage to craft diverse coffee products tailored to evolving consumer tastes and wellness trends.

It was an honor to represent Vietnam's booming coffee industry at Expo 2020 Dubai, one of the world's premier global events. Our booth allowed King Coffee to highlight Vietnam's proud Robusta coffee culture and tradition of excellence. Through over 25 years of tireless "change the game", King Coffee and I have brought The Guinness World Records for Vietnamese Robusta coffee beans in 5 categories: Vietnam was honored as the world's largest Robusta exporter and productivity; Vietnamese coffee-making culture; The art of mixing and enjoying Vietnamese coffee. This recognition cements Vietnam's status as a global coffee powerhouse, with King Coffee spearheading the country's emergence.

How has King Coffee navigated through these challenges, and what lessons have you learned that could benefit other businesses in the F&B industry?

The coffee and F&B industries will continue to grow in all special situations. I believe that spirit is very important. It is necessary to correctly assess situations, risks, and opportunities to determine direction. We cannot change the wind but must turn our sails to adapt and find a way to break through. Therefore, I often say, 'If you want to overcome a storm, you must fly at a higher level.'

Certainly, I always strive to create products and apply the most optimal solutions to develop strong e-commerce globally, quickly affirming the value and position of the Vietnamese coffee brand on the world map. From there, I continue to shape the coffee industry to a new level, enhancing the value of coffee not only as a common drink but also as a link between coffee and culture for sustainable development.

As a successful businesswoman, what advice would you give to women aspiring to make a mark in the business world, particularly in traditionally male-dominated industries?

As a leader from resilient Vietnam, renowned for its 4,000-year heritage of ingenuity, I penned my memoir "The Queen of King Coffee" to empower youth worldwide.

I aim to inspire strategic thinking, fearless dreaming, and sustainable growth by sharing the trials and triumphs of my entrepreneurial journey. This book is my gift to future leaders who dare to create big, better communities and develop fulfilling careers. My story highlights how vision, persistence, and passion can propel progress even in adversity.

In 2016, I set my sights even higher, establishing King Coffee to culminate my work into a new, world-leading coffee empire. With an international-first strategy, King Coffee converged of all the quintessence and rapidly affirmed its reputation globally.

I'm living proof that anyone can succeed with the right mindset. The English edition is now available on Amazon to serve global readers: <https://bit.ly/5SZUXA5>

SHAPING THE FUTURE OF ASIAN BEAUTY: YOSHIAKI HAGIWARA



We had the honor of interviewing Yoshiaki Hagiwara, a pioneering leader in the Asian natural cosmetics industry. Hagiwara is the president and CEO of Nature's Way and the director of the Japan Cosmetic Industry Association, Aroma Environment Association, and Aichi Cosmetic Industry Association. In this exclusive interview, Hagiwara pulls back the curtain on his leadership journey. With captivating candor and sagacity, he reveals how he overcame obstacles, drove strategic vision, and fostered an inclusive workplace.

Written by Sherlyn Gomes

As a prominent leader, what obstacles did you face in your career, and how did you overcome them?

I faced a unique obstacle early in my career - being perceived as the successor to my father's role as president due to our family connection rather than my own merits. I am keenly aware that I attained this prominent leadership position through business succession. From the moment I joined the company, employees treated me as the next in line for leadership. Yet, with little experience navigating success or failure on my

own, my decisions were often inadequate.

To overcome this, I implemented an annual 360-degree evaluation where all 200 employees and their superiors - including me - assess each other. Although receiving negative feedback is initially frustrating, I embrace it as an opportunity to reflect and improve. I get constructive criticism and praise each year, spurring my continued growth. Obstacles persist in business, but by accepting I am an owner-president via family succession and not denying it, I avoid overestimating my abilities. This mindset enables me to solve problems better when they arise.

Could you walk us through the company's journey and your role in shaping its landscape?

My foremost role is to provide clarity of purpose and direction to all staff. I continually communicate where we are heading as a company - the goals and the means to achieve them. There is no single right answer; with a team of 10 people, there are 10 different perspectives. We cannot efficiently concentrate our collective efforts if we clearly define and align on desired outcomes and chosen methods.

We share meeting minutes, conveying my stance so employees need not speculate. Though not infallible, I make the best call I can and course-correct as needed. I believe clearly setting direction, even in uncertainty, is central to my role as a leader.

What strategies do you employ to navigate challenges unique to leaders in your industry or region?

How do you foster an inclusive and diverse workplace culture?

Navigating industry and regional challenges requires adaptability as solutions differ across cultures and values evolve. There are no unified right answers. This is why I hold individual interviews with all 200+ employees every six months - although exhausting, these conversations surface issues that otherwise go unseen. We then share anonymized feedback company-wide, highlighting problems and potential solutions.

What might be deemed acceptable in one context, like certain manga content when I was a child, can understandably offend elsewhere. Rather than prescribe top-down edicts, I foster an inclusive culture by encouraging open dialogue. Making problems visible, not hiding them, is key. We can collaborate on answers by publicly airing grievances internally rather than burying them. I believe disclosing and demystifying issues, not concealing them, elicits the collective insight needed to move forward.

Can you share an instance where your leadership decisions have significantly influenced your organization's or industry's growth or direction?

As a leader, I've significantly shaped our direction by setting clear priorities aligned with reality. Leaders must balance ambitious growth with pragmatism. We only have 24 hours a day, with about 8 for work. Despite many desires, our capacity is limited. Rather than chasing everything, I defined a few vital initiatives where we should invest our finite human, financial, and time resources.

Customer feedback is important, but we can't meet every request. I set guiding policies, like only accommodating the top 10% of customers by purchase value. By deciding what not to do, I enable focus on priority growth. This discipline has made us resilient, sustaining operations despite COVID-19's challenges.



How do you envision the future of your industry, considering the rapidly changing economic landscape and technological advancements in Asia?

For two decades, starting in the 1980s, Japan led Asia in technology. But those days have passed; we recognize our former leadership is unfortunately no longer the reality. India and other countries make remarkable tech advancements, eclipsing Japan in many sectors. This is especially true in cosmetics, where the meteoric growth of China and South Korea is staggering. It's no exaggeration to say these two countries will be the epicenter of Asian cosmetics for the foreseeable future.

Our company doesn't chase short-term trends, so we aren't directly impacted. Pursuing the majority market share is a "winner's strategy" best left to big players. As a smaller firm, we succeed through a "loser's strategy," specializing in a niche. We focus on steadily providing products and services that passionately resonate with a targeted segment. So, while we monitor the competitive landscape's macro shifts, our micro view focuses on fulfilling individual customer needs.

What would you advise budding leaders looking to shatter the glass ceiling?

I advise voracious learning from veteran leaders whose wisdom transcends eras. Conferring with senior industry peers grounds me in timeless fundamentals, though ideas spark change. Be open to lifelong, humble learning. Shattering ceilings requires bold vision yet honoring enduring truths. Keep listening to those further along the path whose focus on foundational principles can anchor innovation. Stand on the shoulders of giants who came before you.

Leaders must balance ambitious growth with pragmatism. We only have 24 hours a day, with about 8 for work.

CRAFTING EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP ACROSS NATIONS WITH GLOBAL INFLUENCE

Written by contributing writer Jose Ucar



About the author:

Jose Ucar is an international influence and communication expert with over a decade of experience working with businesses such as Procter & Gamble, SEAT-CUPRA, and Amazon. He is a TEDx speaker, trainer, and coach who helps business leaders build strong and successful international relationships with customers and colleagues alike. Jose's mission is to enable organizations to communicate effectively internationally in a way that gives them a competitive edge.

Jose's new book, *Global Influence*, is an essential read for leaders looking to amplify their global impact and create meaningful connections with others, regardless of culture.

In an era where leadership transcends borders and cultures, "Becoming a More Effective Leader Across Nations" delves into the multifaceted approach necessary for guiding diverse teams to success.

Drawing on the insights from my book "Global Influence," this article explores the critical roles of the human explorer, learner, and stretcher alongside the strategic frameworks of the SIMPLER model and the 5Cs of Global Influence.

Through these lenses, the aim is to equip leaders with the tools and perspectives needed to foster understanding, innovation, and growth in a world rich with cultural diversity.

The Human Explorer, Learner, and Stretcher Traits:

In the journey to becoming a more effective leader across nations, embracing the roles of the human explorer, learner, and stretcher is crucial. This approach underscores the necessity for leaders to venture beyond their familiar territories, demonstrating curiosity and an eagerness to understand diverse cultures and perspectives.

- **The human explorer** symbolizes the leader's quest for knowledge in the vast landscape of global business, fostering an environment where curiosity leads to discovery and innovation.

- **As learners**, leaders must adopt a mindset of continuous education, recognizing that the complexities of global leadership demand an ongoing commitment to understanding the nuances of different cultures, economies, and political landscapes. This learning extends beyond academic knowledge, embracing the lessons learned from direct interactions and experiences within various cultural contexts.
- The concept of **the stretcher** further emphasizes the need for leaders to push beyond their comfort zones, challenging themselves and their teams to grow and adapt in the face of new and often unexpected challenges. This aspect is about stretching one's capabilities and resilience adapting leadership styles to be more inclusive, empathetic, and effective across different cultural contexts.

Linking these three roles forms the foundation for a leadership style that is both globally aware and adaptable. It sets the stage for the application of the SIMPLER model, and the understanding of the 5Cs of Global Influence, which further elaborate on the practical steps and strategies leaders can employ to enhance their global influence effectively. Through this holistic approach, leaders are better equipped to navigate the complexities of international leadership, fostering environments of mutual respect, learning, and innovation.

The SIMPLER Model:

The SIMPLER model offers a strategic framework designed to enhance communication and leadership across cultures. It encapsulates seven key principles: Slow down, Intention, Multicultural lens, Preconceptions, Language, Energetic engagement, and Review and reframe. Each principle serves as a step towards more effective and impactful communication in a global context.

1. **Slow Down:** Emphasizes the importance of thoughtful communication, urging leaders to be accurate, brief, and clear.
2. **Intention:** Focuses on being mindful of the desired impact and outcome of communication, stressing personal responsibility in the process.
3. **Multicultural Lens:** Encourages viewing interactions through a lens that is respectful of cultural differences and similarities, promoting curiosity and openness.
4. **Preconceptions:** Challenges leaders to move beyond stereotypes and assumptions, advocating for a focus on individual uniqueness.
5. **Language:** Advises on adapting language to the listener's proficiency level to ensure

clarity and understanding, especially in English, the language used most frequently in business.

6. **Energetic Engagement:** Highlights the importance of positive energy and engagement in creating meaningful connections.
7. **Review and Reframe:** Suggests reflecting on interactions to learn and improve and reframing perspectives to enhance relationships.

This model provides a comprehensive approach for leaders to refine their communication skills, ensuring they are more effectively understood and can foster stronger relationships across different cultures. By applying the SIMPLER model, leaders can navigate the complexities of global leadership with greater empathy, clarity, and impact.

The 5Cs of Global Influence:

The 5Cs of Global Influence—Conveyor, Coach, and Challenger—enrich the concept of global leadership by promoting a balanced approach to communication and influence. Leaders who embody these roles can navigate the complexities of global interactions with agility and insight.

- As **Conveyors**, they provide clear instructions and guidance, ensuring that their teams understand the expectations and objectives.
- Adopting the **Coach** style, leaders encourage autonomy and self-reliance, fostering a culture of growth and development.
- As **Challengers**, they provoke critical thinking and innovation, challenging assumptions and encouraging new perspectives.

These roles, when used strategically, enable leaders to empower their teams, enhance engagement, and drive meaningful change across cultural and geographic boundaries, aligning seamlessly with the SIMPLER model for effective international leadership.

Effective leadership across nations demands more than just a traditional skill set; it requires an understanding of cultural nuances, an unwavering commitment to continuous learning, and the ability to communicate with clarity and empathy. The exploration of the human explorer, learner, and stretcher roles, the application of the SIMPLER model, and the embodiment of the 5Cs of Global Influence offers a holistic blueprint for leaders aiming to make a profound impact on the global stage. In embracing these concepts, leaders can transcend cultural and geographical boundaries, creating environments where diversity is celebrated, collaboration is encouraged, and collective success is achieved.

LEADING WITH VISION AND VALUES: AIJAZ MOHAMMAD'S APPROACH AT AAA FREIGHT SERVICES



We had the privilege of speaking with Aijaz Mohammad, Director of AAA Freight Services, a leader driving innovation in the vital warehousing and logistics sector. With a Commerce degree from Christ College Bangalore and a major in finance, Aijaz brings multifaceted expertise to AAA Freight Services.

Written by Alexis Miller

During this insightful interview, Aijaz shares the story of founding AAA Freight Services with his brothers Aizaz and Aifaz, building it into a leading diversified logistics company specializing in the verticals of Chemicals. He outlines the principles and values that guide AAA Freight Services in delivering superior customer service and sustainable growth.

What motivated you to pursue a career in the transportation and logistics industry?

With a finance background, I pursued the conventional path as an auditor at Deloitte. Yet,

I soon realized that the monotonous nature of this work did not align with my passions. Craving more dynamic experiences, I pivoted to a shipping and logistics company. There, under the mentoring of my boss, Mr. Jaleel, I gained invaluable cross-functional knowledge across divisions like finance, operations, and sales. This comprehensive experience equipped me with the capabilities to take the leap into entrepreneurship.

In 2008, I embraced my calling and co-founded AAA as a family business with my brothers, starting as a transport company. We soon moved to expand into freight forwarding, broadening our service offerings. Followed by in 2015, we ventured into our first chemical

logistics center in Jebel Ali Free Zone-Dubai, pioneering this vertical. Since then, we have steadily built multiple warehouses focused primarily on chemical logistics. We evolved AAA from a local startup to a diversified logistics leader through strategic expansion, enabling us to capitalize on new opportunities.

With over 20 years of experience at AAA Freight Services, what challenges did you face while setting up the company?

Like any startup, securing financing was our biggest roadblock, unlike today's fundraising landscape. We aimed to evolve AAA from a

traditional freight company into a chemical logistics operator - a capital-intensive pivot. But with perseverance and RAK Bank's support, we finally brought our vision to life. We now own and operate four facilities spanning 550,000 sq ft across Dubai and Abu Dhabi's key industrial zones. With the vision of expansion, we have ventured into new markets like Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the United Kingdom, enhancing our global footprint for chemical warehousing in the coming years.

What core principles or philosophies guide your leadership approach at AAA Freight Services?

Under the guidance of my father and Chairman, Mohamed Ashraf, the leadership triad of Aizaz, Aifaz, and myself, we have been enabled with clear goal-setting and effective delegation, driving our company's expansion. We take immense pride in our dedicated team members, who have catalyzed our growth. Their dedication is indispensable for excelling in a service-oriented industry like ours. We prioritize resource management across time, money, and personnel to maintain momentum. Process streamlining also ensures smooth operations as our team delivers.

Moreover, we stay abreast of fast-evolving technologies, constantly exploring improvements. But one priority never wavers - our commitment to safety. We adhere strictly to local and international occupational standards, which is critical for building customer trust in this chemical vertical. Handling dangerous goods reliably amidst complexity is our expertise.

What sets AAA Freight Services apart from its competitors?

At AAA Freight Services, our team members are what truly set us apart. Innovation and technology drive our ability to deliver superior logistics quickly and accurately. As members of leading partner networks like NAFL, WCA, and J.C. Trans, we provide comprehensive shipping solutions worldwide spanning sea, air, rail, and road freight. We continuously evolve our ERP systems to enable real-time visibility and seamless track and trace capabilities for clients globally.

Additionally, we invest in state-of-the-art warehousing and facilitate trader hubs to enhance our value-added logistics offerings. Guiding us are the values of customer orientation, safety, and sustainability. We strive to work as trusted logistics partners, safely handling even challenging chemical hazardous cargo.



But ultimately, our people's skills and close customer collaboration enable us to stay on the cutting edge. We pride ourselves on leveraging the latest solutions to provide high-quality, economical logistics tailored to each client's needs. Our customer-centric approach backed by global capabilities ensures we remain the logistics partner of choice.

Given your extensive experience, what trends do you foresee in the transportation and logistics industry?

As we look ahead, key focus areas will be digitization, sustainability, personalization, and globalization. To align with future markets, we must embrace continuous learning and adaptation. We will identify strategies leveraging emerging technologies to drive efficiency. Embedding sustainability across operations will be critical for ethical growth.

This multifaceted approach will enable us to innovate new business models that thrive

amidst global complexities. Markets will rapidly evolve, but by staying nimble and forward-focused, we can lead change rather than react to it.

Can you share a piece of advice for budding leaders in the industry?

First, develop a deep understanding of the logistics industry - its intricacies, challenges, and future directions. Immerse yourself in the field. Next, foster a culture of continuous improvement. Avoid complacency and incentivize learning at all levels. Stay updated with emerging technologies and how they could enhance operations. But balance innovation with pragmatism - implement changes strategically.

Most importantly, build a strong team united by trust and a collaborative spirit. Recognize contributions and develop talent consistently. Finally, maintain focus on incremental progress through daily improvements. It's mastering the small things that lead to excellence.

HOW TO SUCCEED IN INCORPORATING PERSONAL VALUES INTO YOUR PROFESSIONAL GOALS

Written by contributing writer Britta Bibel-Cavallaro



About the author:

Britta Bibel-Cavallaro is a relentless human change-maker, mentor, certified high-performance coach™, and lifelong dancer on a mission to make transformation possible and accepted as a productive and sustained way of being human.

With over 25 years of experience as a transformational leader and executive coach, Britta has spent over eight years coaching executives and teams in multiple contexts under the supervision of a Jungian Analyst, mastering the nuances of engaging the unconscious for transformative results.

In the midst of a career that often demands the relentless pursuit of professional achievements, many individuals find themselves at a crossroads, especially as they navigate the pivotal age range of the late thirties to mid-fifties. This period is often characterized by introspection and a re-evaluation of what truly matters in life.

The journey from being at the helm of leadership to rediscovering oneself beyond the executive suite is both daunting and exhilarating. This article delves into the essence of making a successful transition that aligns with your personal values and professional aspirations, offering insights and strategies for those seeking to redefine success on their own terms.

The identity beyond titles

For many executives, stepping down from a position of power can feel akin to losing a part of their identity. Years, if not decades, of defining oneself by a corporate role leads to the inevitable question: "Who am I beyond the executive suite?" This question marks the beginning of a profound journey toward rediscovering passions and purposes that extend beyond corporate achievements.

The transition from a high-powered position is not merely about moving away from something; it's about moving towards something that genuinely ignites your passion. However, embracing this change often feels like stepping off a cliff into the vast unknown. The security of a well-

defined role disappears, ushering in a realm filled with endless possibilities. It is within this realm of the unknown that true magic and self-discovery lie.

Leveraging decades of experience

The wealth of experience accumulated over years in leadership positions is an invaluable asset during this transition. This experience serves as a treasure trove of skills, insights, and wisdom that can illuminate the path forward. The real challenge lies in embracing the vulnerability of starting anew and leveraging past experiences while remaining open to learning and growth in new directions.

Transitioning from a corporate leader to a role that more closely aligns with my personal values and becoming a holistic high-performance coach and culture transformation expert is a testament to the power of this journey. It was a path marked by self-doubt but also the exhilaration of forging a new identity. This journey underscores the importance of staying true to one's core values and passions, even when the path ahead is unclear.

The path to rediscovery

For executives standing at this crossroads, it is crucial to remember that life after leadership is not about seeking a new title. It is about rediscovering who you are and what truly makes you feel alive. This period offers a unique opportunity to explore, learn, and thrive in ways previously unimagined.



The process of incorporating personal values into professional goals involves several key steps:

- 1. Reflection:** Take the time to reflect on your core values and what you are genuinely passionate about. This introspection is the foundation of your journey forward.
- 2. Exploration:** Be open to exploring new opportunities that align with your values and passions. This exploration might lead you down paths you had never considered before.

- 3. Learning:** Embrace the role of a learner once again. Acquiring new skills and knowledge can be incredibly empowering and can open up new avenues for personal and professional growth.

- 4. Integration:** Seek ways to integrate your personal values with your professional endeavors. This alignment will lead to a more fulfilling and meaningful career.

- 5. Networking:** Connect with others who have embarked on similar journeys. These connections provide support, inspiration, and valuable insights as you navigate your own transition.

Conclusion

The journey from leadership to rediscovering oneself is a deeply personal and transformative experience. It requires courage, openness, and a willingness to embrace the unknown. By

leveraging your experience, staying true to your values, and being open to new possibilities, you can successfully navigate this transition.

Remember, this is not just about finding a new professional identity; it's about aligning your personal values with your professional goals to create a truly fulfilling life. For those in the prime of their personal-professional lives, this journey offers a golden opportunity to redefine success on your own terms.

INNOVATION AMID ADVERSITY: SHADI KÜZAM'S BLUEPRINT FOR GROWTH IN CHALLENGING TIMES



Shadi Kuzam is a seasoned professional with over 30 years of experience in the construction and project management industry. He is the CEO of Kuzam Group.

In this insightful interview, Shadi provides a glimpse into his current roles as CEO, his vision for the future, and the exciting goals and projects on the horizon. Throughout the conversation, his entrepreneurial spirit and drive for innovation shine through as he offers valuable advice for young professionals.

Written by Elena Arnaiz

Can you share the key influences from your early years that led you to pursue a career in civil engineering and project management?

Since childhood, I've been captivated by the world of projects and construction, a fascination that has only grown stronger with time. This passion drives me to immerse myself in every aspect of the built environment, from

the intricate planning stages to the hands-on construction process and the exhilarating moment a project comes to fruition. I am deeply engaged and energized by each step of the journey. This passion has not only shaped my career aspirations. However, it has also become a defining aspect of who I am, fueling my drive to seek new challenges and opportunities within project management and construction.

Can you briefly take us through your career journey?

I began my career as a civil engineer, gaining hands-on experience both on-site and in the technical office. As I progressed, I transitioned into management roles, overseeing a small team and eventually managing a company. This journey culminated in founding and leading several companies. Transitioning into

I began my career as a civil engineer, gaining hands-on experience both on-site and in the technical office. As I progressed, I realized that management is more of an Art than a Science.

leadership marked a pivotal moment, revealing the necessity of a skill set focused on emotional intelligence, soft skills, and technical expertise. To adapt, I pursued avenues such as obtaining my PMP certification, enrolling in business management and leadership courses, and exploring relevant study material. These efforts have enhanced my ability to manage and lead teams effectively.

Can you provide a brief overview of your role as CEO at Kuzam Group which includes companies in UAE and KSA such as GMC, PMO, MindShift, Proimco, Schneider, iFix, AMEP, GrünMe, and other investments?

I instill a philosophy of empowerment and shared success in every company I lead. At the operational core is a managing partner entrusted with the day-to-day running of the business. However, their role extends beyond mere execution – I firmly believe in cultivating a vested interest by offering them an equity stake in the company. This fosters a sense of ownership, ensuring our goals are correctly aligned. When those at the helm have a tangible stake in the outcome, it fortifies the foundations of governance and exponentially increases our chances of realizing success.

My focus pivots towards the broader strategic landscape, innovation, and propelling the company's growth trajectory. I work on crafting bold yet pragmatic visions, nurturing an environment that encourages creative thinking, and mentoring leaders to scale new heights of excellence. Simultaneously, I possess an insatiable drive to expand into uncharted territories, leveraging my entrepreneurial



instincts to identify promising new markets for exploration.

Can you share a notable project or accomplishment you are particularly proud of and what challenges you faced?

One of our most significant triumphs was navigating the dreaded COVID-19 pandemic, a period that posed an existential threat to construction companies worldwide. 2020 was a crucible of unprecedented challenges – project stoppages, plummeting productivity, idle teams, costly safety protocols, delayed payments, staff attrition, and a dearth of new opportunities.

It was a perfect storm that could have capsized even the most seasoned enterprises. In response, we adopted a "Cash Now, Profit Later" strategy, prioritizing healthy cash flow over immediate profit. This approach was crucial for our survival. Despite the harsh circumstances, we not only survived but also managed to expand and grow the business.

In your 30 years of experience, what leadership principles have you found most effective in the construction and project management industry?

In my extensive 30-year career in the construction and project management industry, I have learned that effective leadership hinges on several fundamental principles. Firstly, fostering a strong sense of team cohesion through purposeful team-building activities and initiatives is paramount. It is equally important to motivate team members by recognizing their contributions, setting clear goals, and providing opportunities for growth and development.

Additionally, displaying empathy toward team members' needs and concerns fosters a supportive and collaborative work environment. Finally, emphasizing and honing emotional intelligence skills—such as self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, and relationship management—has proven invaluable in navigating the complex dynamics inherent in project management and construction settings.

What goals or projects are you particularly excited about shortly?

Looking ahead, I am particularly excited about expanding our reach by opening new companies and exploring new markets. Additionally, I am eager to delve into incubating more businesses and fostering innovation within our industry. As for my role, I envision taking on a more strategic leadership position, guiding our expansion efforts, and mentoring young talents to ensure our organization's sustainable and prosperous future.

Based on your journey, what advice would you offer young professionals aspiring to project management and construction leadership roles?

To young professionals aspiring to leadership roles in project management and construction, my advice is simple: be innovative. While following the crowd can lead to success, true excellence often requires standing out. Embrace the challenge of generating fresh ideas and approaches. Innovation not only sets you apart but also demonstrates your ability to adapt and lead in dynamic environments. So, dare to think differently and strive to carve your path forward.

WALKING THE TALK: INSIGHTS FROM COMPANY SECRETARIAL VETERAN BELINDA WONG



Belinda Wong is a veteran corporate services professional and celebrated author. As the Director of Leader Corporate Services Limited (Leader), she has over 30 years of extensive experience advising local and multinational corporations on company secretarial matters. Her interview provides an inside look at her inspirational journey, which took her from working at Big 4 firms to launching her successful consultancy in 2010.

Written by Brianna Da Cruz

Can you walk us through the key milestones in your career that led you to your current position as the Director of Leader Corporate Services Limited?

In 1997, while employed at Price Waterhouse, one of the Big 6 audit firms, a merger with Coopers & Lybrand was announced, forming one of the Big 5 professional services firms. My team transitioned under new leadership from our merger partners. Years later, our corporate services department integrated former Andersen personnel when Arthur Andersen collapsed due to the Enron scandal.

In 2005, our entire team was acquired by a bank-led holding company. Two years later, I departed and joined several international law firms before founding my own company, Leader Corporate Services Limited, in 2010.

Foreseeing career instability during that tumultuous period, I proactively pursued professional development through training courses and certifications from the Hong Kong Institute of Directors and the Hong Kong Securities and Investment Institute to enhance my marketability.

Today, I am a Fellow Member of both prestigious bodies.

As the owner of Leader Corporate Services Limited, what valuable insights have you gained about entrepreneurship and company secretarial services?

Entrepreneurial ventures and corporate secretarial services are built upon self-discipline and skilled management. Entrepreneurs must embody integrity, technical prowess, and exceptional interpersonal abilities to steer their enterprises. A clear vision for the future, tempered by restraint on personal avarice, ensures all stakeholders receive equitable treatment.

Company secretarial services ensure clients meet all corporate and legal requirements. Prioritizing clients' best interests forms the bedrock of service, complemented by technical excellence and superior customer service acumen.

Simply put, everyone must walk the talk.



Could you share a specific challenge you faced in your career and the steps you took to overcome it?

The corporate world was upended in March 2014 when Hong Kong enacted its massive new Companies Ordinance (Cap. 622) (CO) - the longest legislation on our books. As an experienced company secretary, I knew we would all need to adapt quickly as legal concepts shifted and new forms were introduced.

Thankfully, I was commissioned to write a new edition of the Company Secretary's Practice Manual. While a daunting task, analyzing the entire ordinance line-by-line proved invaluable. Not only could I author an authoritative practice guide, but I gained intimate knowledge of the revised compliance regulations for advising clients.

Could you share a key concept or advice from your book, "Hong Kong Company Secretary Practice Manual 5th Edition," that you believe is essential for business professionals?

Integrity is of utmost importance! The CO specifies the rights and obligations of members

as well as the fiduciary duties of directors. The requirement to appoint auditors and circulation to all members of the financial statements issued by the auditors is to ensure that companies incorporated under the CO are conducted in a transparent and law-abiding way.

Good governance also involves treating all stakeholders, i.e., employees, suppliers, consumers, and the environment, properly. Authoring a comprehensive practice manual necessitated deep research, fostering an intimate understanding of the corporate governance principles underlying the regulations.

Company secretarial practice is more than just completing and submitting specified forms to the government authority. It involves advising clients on how to comply with corporate and other laws. When there are disputes between directors and/or members, company secretaries are requested to advise on the corporate law and to sit in the meetings. The foremost requirement is to understand why the dispute comes up. What are the points of view and interests of the different parties? How could the relevant sections of the CO and the constitution and/or shareholder agreement address the issues?

In hindsight, many disputes could have been avoided if parties had acted with consideration for others and stringent rule adherence.

How has your involvement in the SME and Taxation Committees of the HK General Chamber of Commerce influenced your perspective on Hong Kong's business landscape?

Senior officials are invited to discuss various government policies and practices during the first part of the committee meetings. Clients can be updated on the business / legal environments. Members of the SME committee are from different industries. When clients need other services, e.g., office leasing, staff recruitment, or others, members are the source of referrals. The Taxation Committee focuses not only on the Hong Kong taxation regime but also on expected changes in line with the global tax initiatives initiated by the OECD (The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) and EU (European Union) are also discussed. The information can alert clients to structure their operations.

She is also an active member of The Chinese Manufacturers' Association of Hong Kong, which has many members in different manufacturing industries. Proper advice and guidance can be obtained when doing business in China.

Looking back at your journey, what advice would you passionately share with young professionals aspiring to venture into corporate services and business consulting?

My advice is threefold:

1. Widen the vision and knowledge of the commercial world!
2. Prioritize maintaining your health through good exercise!
3. Always be prepared for change!

Entrepreneurs must embody integrity, technical prowess, and exceptional interpersonal abilities to steer their enterprises... Everyone must walk the talk.

TECHNIQUES FOR DEVELOPING TEAMS AND CULTIVATING FUTURE LEADERS

Written by contributing writer **Cecilia Gorman**



About the author:

Wildly addicted to all things leadership, **Cecilia Gorman** is a veteran of the advertising industry and the owner of Creative Talent Partners, a training consultancy that specializes in the development of rising managers and their teams. Whether it's a team offsite, a manager workshop or through her online Manager Boot Camp course, Cecilia's sole pursuit is adding value to growth-focused employees.

As an executive, the choices you make play a crucial role in steering your organization toward its goals. Leaders stand out by having a distinct direction and the courage to overcome challenges that arise.

However, the core of influential leadership is in inspiring others. Leaders don't just handle day-to-day team tasks - they actively seek ways to motivate and inspire their colleagues to achieve great things for the organization and themselves.

Why is it Crucial to Actively Develop Your Team?

Actively developing your team is crucial for sustained success and organizational growth in today's dynamic and competitive landscape. By investing in the growth and skill enhancement of your team members with managerial training, you not only cultivate a culture of continuous learning and improvement but also foster loyalty and engagement.

Developing your team ensures they are equipped with the latest knowledge, tools, and expertise, enabling them to adapt to changing market demands, innovate effectively, and drive collective performance towards achieving strategic objectives.

Ultimately, a well-developed team enhances productivity, strengthens the organization's reputation, and positions it for long-term success in a rapidly evolving global environment. When individuals sense they are valued and notice a genuine effort from their leader towards their

career development, their engagement in their roles and the organization organically increases.

Mastering the Art of People Management

Mastering the art of people management is essential for global leaders to maximize the potential of their teams. To lead a team successfully, honing softer skills like empathy, communication, and coaching is key. Leaders need to be adept at not just assigning tasks but also at connecting with and influencing those around them.

Those who excel in people management foster a culture of trust, collaboration, and empowerment, enabling team members to thrive and contribute their best work. Building the foundation of strong personal relationships, backed by effective communication, is what differentiates top-performing teams. By prioritizing the development of these interpersonal skills, leaders can build strong, cohesive groups that are productive and engaged, ultimately driving overall performance and business outcomes.

Embracing the Idea of Delegation

At the heart of great leadership lies the critical importance of delegation. This means assigning tasks to team members and granting them the freedom to make their own decisions, offering leadership support to them as needed.



The challenge for many leaders is often in overcoming the desire to keep control over all aspects of their team's work. The struggle over perfectionism and control often limits even the most well-intentioned leaders.

However, effective delegation can be transformative, offering team members opportunities for development and allowing leaders to concentrate on more critical strategic goals for the company. The goal is to create

an environment where people are given responsibility and empowered to learn and grow coupled with the safety to risk failure while trying. This skill is crucial to develop when expanding a leader's impact and contributing to organizational success.

Laying a Strong Foundation of Trust

A leader must lay a strong foundation of trust within their teams to cultivate a cohesive and

high-performing environment. Trust fosters open communication, collaboration, and a sense of psychological safety, empowering team members to express ideas, take calculated risks, and contribute their full potential.

When trust is established, team members are more likely to align with the leader's vision, demonstrate commitment, and work together towards common goals. Additionally, trust enhances resilience in times of challenge or

uncertainty, as teams are more inclined to support each other and navigate obstacles effectively. Ultimately, a leader's ability to build and maintain trust is fundamental to fostering a positive organizational culture and achieving sustained success.

In an effort to build trust, leaders can practice transparency and vulnerability when communicating. By being more open and readily admitting their own challenges or faults,

leaders can cultivate a team environment where both relationships and trust can grow. As well, celebrating team members' hard work regularly is another way to solidify this foundational trust with others.

Prioritize Regular Individual Meetings

While team-wide meetings are essential for collaborative work and updates, prioritizing one-on-one meetings with each team member is crucial for leaders.

These consistent and personal check-ins serve as safe platforms for employees to discuss their performance, difficulties they experience, and career objectives. They also allow leaders to identify each team member's strong points and potential areas for improvement, which is vital for efficient task management and constructive feedback.

By allocating time for these meaningful conversations - outside of other tactical catch-up meetings - leaders express their commitment to supporting the personal and professional development of their team members.

Unlock Your Team's Full Potential

Listening to and supporting your team is just the beginning. Truly unlocking their potential means growing your relationship (and, in turn, trust), improving communication lines, and delegating effectively, enabling them to take ownership of their tasks. This empowerment impacts many other aspects of engagement that affect a business's bottom line - productivity, enthusiasm, and collaboration, for example.

Get creative with development strategies like cross-functional collaborations, internal mentoring programs, and professional training courses. Also, promoting the recognition of your team's contributions to upper management and underscoring the value of company-supported training can be a great way to recognize and reinforce your team's full potential.

Help Your Employees Thrive

The formula for unlocking your team's potential is relatively achievable for many. Simply put, the effort you put in directly influences the outcomes you receive. By dedicating time to regular dialogue, skill development, relationship building, and cultivating a trusting environment, you set the stage for your team's success and growth.

Work towards cultivating a culture that prioritizes personal growth and continuous learning among your team members. This not only enhances your team's efficiency and output but will continue to attract top talent to your organization.



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About your Retreat Host, Saahil Mehta

Saahil Mehta, an entrepreneur, coach, and avid mountaineer, embodies the spirit of pushing boundaries. From conquering peaks like Kilimanjaro and Elbrus to coaching conscious leaders, his journey is a testament to breaking illusions of personal limits. Through his book "Break Free," he shares his journey of transcending limits and invites others to embark on their path of personal mastery and growth. Experience the thrill of the climb and the joy of redefining success with Saahil Mehta.

THE AI POLYMATH: DILIP PRASAD'S QUEST TO HUMANIZE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

A distinguished professor at UiT and the National University of Singapore, Dilip Prasad is at the vanguard of tackling artificial intelligence's biggest hurdles—enhancing scalability, interpretability, and centering human values. In this candid interview, the academic maverick unveils his driving inspirations, approaches for cultivating global collaborations, and initiatives that could catalyze seismic advances in healthcare, reproductive technologies, and environmental sustainability.

Written by Sherlyn Gomes



What motivated you to pursue a career in academia?

As a software engineer rapidly advancing at Philips Digital TV, I felt constrained by the limited scope of product development. The deeper I explored AI and image processing, the more I was consumed by more significant questions around the scalability, robustness, and explainability of AI systems - issues critical to the future trajectory of this powerful technology.

I realized that tackling these challenges required complete immersion in academia. So, in 2008, I took the plunge into a PhD at Nanyang Technological University. This transition provided me with a new path to advance the cause of AI research.

Over the past decade, my research has focused on making artificial intelligence more scalable and explainable, which is critical in developing robust AI systems.

How do you approach collaboration and knowledge exchange across different institutions and cultures?

Working with academics from India, China, Singapore, the U.S., Israel, the U.K., and 11 other European Union nations has been an incredibly enriching experience. Early on, I realized that embracing cultural diversity was key. Each country has unique academic traditions and communication styles that I needed to understand and respect. So, I made it a point to immerse myself, learn the nuances, and adapt accordingly.

But what elevated these partnerships was the mindset of mutual learning and flexibility I tried to bring. I wasn't just teaching or being taught—it was a constant exchange of knowledge and perspectives, an openness to having my views challenged while offering the same opportunity.

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This approach facilitated a much deeper engagement. What started as cross-institutional collaborations often blossomed into sustained relationships. We prioritized regular check-ins, co-authored publications, and jointly applied for grants. It was academic camaraderie at its finest.

Can you share some current projects or research initiatives you're particularly excited about, and how do you see these advancements shaping the future of these fields?

The advancements from these high-impact projects, collectively funded at around 24 million Euros, are set to profoundly influence the fields of health diagnostics, reproduction technology, and environmental sustainability. The "nanoAI" initiative, focused on developing artificial intelligence to interpret nanoscale imagery, holds pivotal significance for accelerating breakthroughs in the life sciences. Its potential applications include earlier disease detection and unprecedented insights into cellular processes, which could revolutionize our understanding of biology and medicine.

Moreover, the "BETTER" project aims to transform health data analytics across the European Union by enhancing the interoperability of health data systems while ensuring robust data security and privacy measures. In organ-specific research, "OrganVision" creates real-time visual models of organ processes. This groundbreaking work could reshape our comprehension and treatment of organ-specific diseases by providing novel



insights into health, disease progression, and recovery mechanisms. Complementing this initiative, "nanoVision" leverages an innovative photonic chip-based platform for high-throughput, multi-modal nanoscopy, pushing the boundaries of how we visualize cellular processes at unprecedented scales and speeds.

Addressing reproductive technology, "Spermotile" employs artificial intelligence to enhance the success rates of assisted reproduction technologies. While "VirtualStain" employs artificial intelligence to perform virtual staining on cardiovascular tissues, potentially reducing reliance on chemical dyes and expediting the diagnostic process. This cutting-edge approach could contribute to faster and more accurate cardiovascular disease diagnosis.

The ASME Journal of Nondestructive Evaluation, Diagnostics, and Prognostics of Engineering Systems has recognized you for your outstanding paper. Could you delve into the research behind this paper and its implications for the field?

The research recognized by the ASME Journal of Nondestructive Evaluation, Diagnostics, and Prognostics of Engineering Systems, titled "Deep Learning-Based Denoising of Acoustic Images Generated with Point Contact Method," addresses a crucial challenge in improving the quality of acoustic images, which are essential for nondestructive evaluation techniques employed across various engineering disciplines. By

leveraging deep learning algorithms to denoise these images, the research has significantly enhanced their clarity and usability, thereby improving the accuracy of assessments for structural integrity without causing any damage.

The implications of this study are substantial for fields that rely heavily on precise diagnostics of materials and components, such as aerospace, automotive, and manufacturing industries. Improved image quality leads to more reliable evaluations, preventing failures and accidents while reducing costs associated with physical testing methods. This contribution advances the technology in nondestructive testing. It sets a new benchmark for integrating artificial intelligence into traditional engineering diagnostics, promoting more widespread adoption of these advanced techniques in routine evaluations.

What advice would you give budding leaders trying to break into the industry?

Having navigated academia, corporations, and startups, I've learned that true leadership demands perpetual evolution. It's more than hard skills - a diverse toolkit of soft skills, resilience, creativity, and ethics. You must be a lifelong learner, constantly adapting as landscapes shift. Most crucially, cultivate a network of meaningful relationships that provide new perspectives and opportunities. For entrepreneurs, alignment on the vision from the outset is crucial, providing a guiding light as you scale. Sustainable success stems from that dedication to self-improvement and team synergy while embracing a growth mindset.



SELF-DEVELOPMENT: THE ACTION OF INACTION

Written by contributing writer Sandeep Gupta



About the author:

Sandeep is a professionally certified coach, a chartered accountant, and a CPA. He is passionate about helping people live a meaningful and fulfilled life focusing on high achievers with his 8-week programme - Explore, Evolve & Emerge. For more information visit: <https://sandeepcoach.com/>

In the pursuit of self-development, we often find ourselves at the crossroads of familiarity and change, grappling with the inertia that hinders our progress. How do we navigate this intricate terrain of personal growth, where the allure of comfort competes with the necessity of transformation? Self-development beckons us to confront the aspects of ourselves that crave improvement, yet it also demands introspection and vulnerability. What drives us to resist change, even when we acknowledge its potential benefits?

Nothing changes if nothing changes. If we keep on taking the same road, how can our destination be different? Logical, but one we are experts at ignoring, especially in matters of self-development.

Understandable, because self-development implies there is a part of us that can do with development, a part of us that is faulty. Not everyone can be vulnerable to think this way, but if we can, then congratulations are in order. For all of us can do with some self-development and accepting this is a major win.

Self-development will require changes in our life. Some changes come easy to us and others can be quite challenging. For an introvert, learning the skill of public speaking can feel like a herculean task, but becoming more self-aware may be easier.

What makes change difficult? At its core, the concept is one of pain and pleasure. The anticipated pleasure from the required action is not strong enough to overcome the anticipated pain.

In the case of the introvert, the anticipated pain (fear) of speaking in public is more than the anticipated pleasure from public speaking. This reveals itself in the form of procrastination, finding excuses on why certain actions could not be performed, etc.

Inertia

How do we confront the paradox of recognizing the need for change, yet encountering inertia when it comes to taking decisive action? Can you elaborate on the psychological barriers that impede our ability to bridge the gap between intention and execution, particularly in the realm of personal growth and self-improvement?

These questions underscore the intricate interplay between pain and pleasure, anticipation and reluctance, shaping our journey towards self-improvement.

We recognise the desire for a change in our life, do the research, devise a strategy, and then... it never takes off. Inertia takes hold. We trip ourselves up at the execution stage.

This is often the stumbling block. We come to the edge but find ourselves unable to take the jump.

The action of inaction!

Our brains are wired to protect us, wired to give more weight to pain than pleasure. Which makes it easier to avoid action when pain is associated with it. Recall the new year resolutions that we keep repeating year after year. The fatty food that we are unable to give up even though we know how bad they are.

Here are some **simple steps** we can take to make the change easier:

Overcoming Inertia

Overcoming inertia takes high energy. Once the motion starts, it is easier to remain in motion. Change in our lives is no different. Overcoming inertia is a huge roadblock.

We need to recognise the reality is more likely to be that the actual pain from the change will be less than anticipated; and the actual pleasure will be more than anticipated.

We function out of habit. Research suggests we make 55,000 decisions a day, or about one decision every two seconds. This is possible because the brain works out of habit. Learning how to drive takes a lot of our attention and energy, but once driving becomes a routine, it goes into our subconscious and frees up our energy and attention for other tasks.

Our life follows a pattern and much of these patterns operate from the subconscious. Changing these patterns is met with resistance from our brain. The brain says - 'we have survived so far, why the change, why the uncertainty?'

Especially true for the high achievers. After all, what high achievers have accomplished is a testimony that their strategy works. The question they are asking is - why change now?

Why indeed!

Knowing our why is an important motivator.

Why do we want an MBA? Why learn Spanish? Why relocate to a new city? Why a new job? We must dig deep to know the core reason. One method is to ask the '5 Why' question. For instance:

- i. **Why the MBA? To gain more skills.**
- ii. **Why? To get a better paying job.**
- iii. **Why? To educate our children in a private school.**
- iv. **Why? So they get a better opportunity at life than us.**
- v. Why? To feel good about ourselves.

Keeping the Momentum

We deserve a pat on the back for moving from inaction to action. Now we have to keep the momentum to see the change we desire. There are some practices we can follow to tackle the potential roadblocks.



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1. Accountability partner: Adopting an accountability partner keeps us moving. Our run buddy reminds us of tomorrow's run, calls us if we fail to turn up, and we feel honour bound to meet our commitment. Similarly, an accountability partner supports us in our quest for self-development and in avoiding a relapse into the inaction mode. We just need to exercise care while selecting one.
2. Investment: Having a skin in the game helps in our commitment. How often would we get up for a free yoga class? How seriously will

- we take a free upskilling webinar? For many of us, a financial investment, even a small one, is motivation enough. What investment are we making into the change we want in our life? As the saying goes – 'put your money where your mouth is.'
5. Sustainable: Keeping a sustainable pace. This sounds simple, but it is not uncommon for us to get carried away. Perhaps we see a challenge in the change, or the benefits of the change are already visible and exciting. As long as we do not lose focus on what is most important to us – be it a job, relationship or health.

Conclusion

In conclusion, self-development is a laudable objective. It takes courage to recognise that we are not perfect and that change has to begin from us. If we want a different outcome then we must also change, in thought and behaviour. There are two main challenges we face – overcoming the initial inertia of taking actions and to keep up the momentum. Consistency is the key to progress. This journey enriches our life and those around us. That in itself makes this a worthwhile effort.

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