

CORPORATED MANAGEMENT / HUMAN RESOURCES

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STAY AHEAD OF COMPETITION

WHEN GOOD
ENOUGH IS
NO LONGER
ENOUGH

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IMAGINE this situation: You've just arrived at work. Your new spacious work desk welcomes you with a lovely view of the outside, with a carefully placed card on it. The card reads "Congratulations on your promotion!"

A quick smile brakes on your face. The years of hard work, patiently dealing with the ever demanding superiors have finally paid off. No one else deserves this more. Now you're one step higher on the corporate ladder.

SO WHAT'S NEXT?

Naturally, your first order of business is to establish your management style – always an important move for a newly promoted manager.

Now that you have people reporting to you, you have the added responsibility to ensure your employees can deliver quality work on time.

Surely it cannot be that difficult to manage (one would think), since you've been through that before. Gradually, however, you begin to realise the challenges in this new role are vastly different from what you initially perceived. Your expectations change, along with expectations of you.

Let's take a step back and look at the whole situation before you. Think for a moment – why and how did you get that promotion in the first place? In the book *What Got You Here Won't Get You There* by Marshall Goldsmith, the author identifies the key beliefs of successful leaders and also behaviours that hold them back.

Among the topics discussed are the "success delusion". As we delude ourselves with our achievements, our status and contributions, we are often blind to the risks and challenges in our work. As we advance in our career, we begin to resist change.

At the turn of the millennium, the makers of BlackBerry phones created

an entirely new smartphone market, targeting business users. They had a commanding lead while others were slow to catch up. Eventually, Apple responded with its own smartphone, followed quickly by Samsung and the rest.

The rapid advancement and its failure to adapt to changing times pushed it towards irrelevance in the current environment. It is unfortunate that BlackBerry has become a victim of its own success.

Similarly, we have to acknowledge that our past achievements have little correlations to what we can accomplish in the future. What was good enough before is not sufficient now. The needs are totally different. With multiple generations currently in the workplace, that brings a unique challenge – one size does not fit all. What worked well with the baby boomers may not turn out the same for Gen-Y.

Of course, with every challenge there are opportunities to explore. The fast-paced changes offer an avenue to continuously upgrade yourself. Learning on the job (experiential learning) can be one good channel, but with additional responsibilities there are new skills to acquire.

There are a lot of advanced training courses for you and your organisation to benefit from. Even if cost is an issue, you can still find a lot of free online courses if you know where to look.

Aside from people management skills, there are also ways to increase your productivity. In between long meetings (you're the boss now, remember?) and team discussions, not everyone can attend to the hundreds of unopened urgent emails on a daily basis.

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You'll begin to prioritise certain tasks, and if you're not careful, that may lead to communication breakdowns – your subordinates still need your regular feedback.

Luckily, there are a lot of productivity tools to help get work done. More importantly, you can even find some excellent ones for free!

From project management tools to time management apps, these are the inventions that can be of great help when it comes to boosting your efficiency rate.

Some people may find technology to be slightly intimidating and would rather stick with what they are familiar with, but remember that in this day and age, good enough is not anymore.

Besides, the ability to leverage on productivity tools helps you to bridge the different generations in the office – you would speak the same language as the tech savvy (possibly younger) crowd as well as get things done faster

for the veterans.

Let's assume you've done the two things mentioned above – going through advanced development programmes and utilising productivity tools – what else can you do?

Another great avenue for leaders to push their personal boundaries is to impart their knowledge unto others. Teaching or coaching subordinates can be an excellent way to always improve yourself.

Studies have shown that you lose 80% after you learn something new. With our declining attention span and waning retention of information, teaching is highly useful to enhance your learning. It helps you to recall better, organising your thoughts more effectively and overall improvements in your ability to understand and remember the information.

The more you share know-hows and how-tos, the more proficient you are in that subject or skill. Indirectly, you are setting a clear understanding among your team members, improving team

dynamics in the process.

Ultimately, you are inspiring them to converge on one common objective – a very crucial element for teams to work efficiently, and the best indication of a great leader.

Now that you're fully-equipped to take your career to the next level, it is highly important to capitalise on all available means to be great in your profession. What worked before may be outdated and irrelevant in the current environment. You will need to step up your game and be proactively ahead of the ever-increasing competition. Good enough is no longer enough.

■ Imran Hashim is a talent acceleration manager with Leaderonomics and a firm believer in stepping up and out of your comfort zone, especially if you want to progress whether as an individual and/or a nation. To find out more about the Leaderonomics talent acceleration team, email people@leaderonomics.com

