

5 REASONS WHY READING IS GOOD FOR YOU

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STEVE Jobs once said that “people don’t read anymore”. Closer to home, a 2010 survey conducted by the National Library Malaysia showed that Malaysians read between eight and 12 books a year, a slight improvement as compared with only two books in 2005.

In contrast, CEOs of Fortune 500 companies read an average of four to five books a month, translating to 48 to 60 books a year! Well, here are five reasons why reading is good for you:

1 SELF-DISCOVERY

Reading puts us on a journey of self-discovery, more so when it comes to inspiring self-improvement books. Just think how the eight habits imparted by the late Stephen R. Covey have impacted many around the globe.

By being made aware of our own shortcomings, we can then take proactive steps to become a better person. We are, more often than not, transformed at a personal level first before we can become agents of change in our organisation.

2 KNOWLEDGE AND EXPOSURE

Reading broadens our horizons and stirs our train of thoughts. When we delve deeper into “serious” topics such as anthropology, sociology and politics,

the knowledge gained from these fields help to shape our worldview. It opens up our minds for more mature and creative thinking skills that could prove vital when leaders steer an organisation’s direction in the corporate world.

On the other hand, a 2013 Canadian study led by Maja Djikic at the University of Toronto suggested that reading literary fiction helps improve decision-making and make people more comfortable with uncertainty.

If that is the case, imagine how this applies to professionals in the marketplace where we are now expected to lead the “VUCA prime” way, i.e. by vision, understanding, clarity and agility against a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous world.

3 EMPATHY

Another study by psychologists David Comer Kidd and Emanuele Castano concludes that reading fiction improves cognitive empathy, or the ability to understand other people’s emotions.

We all know that people don’t buy products or services; people buy emotions. If we apply the same principle today, we are in dire need of caring leaders in high places.

In fact, a 2012 Towers Watson study showed that the greatest driver of employee engagement is whether they feel their managers have genuine concern for their wellbeing. This empathetic

skill is indispensable when we are in the position of negotiating compensation during a payout or when dealing with employees who face unforeseen personal challenges such as death of a loved one or serious health issues.

4 VERBAL INTELLIGENCE

It is no coincidence that some of the greatest leaders possess the wisest and most memorable of words. One common trait observed in them is that they read voraciously.

Hence, reading expands our verbal intelligence. With this capability, we can effectively articulate ourselves and inspire others when communicating to a team or the entire organisation.

It also creates opportunities for us to interact with our peers and discuss ideas openly.

5 PERSONAL ENJOYMENT

Reading sharpens our minds and helps us to de-stress after a long day at work. We keep our minds alert and always in perspective by immersing

ourselves in good reads.

By putting into practice what we read, we indelibly heighten our memory and retention skills. Such healthy minds result in a more productive and purposeful life. This is further proven by scientific studies that show reading helps delay Alzheimer’s disease.

As the mantra goes, all leaders are readers. If you’re not an avid reader yet, why not kickstart the habit today? After all, it’s better now than never.

